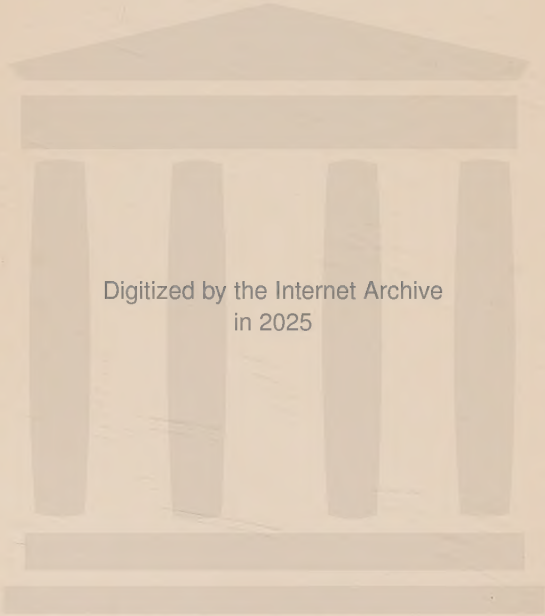
These sermons of St. Bernard of Clairvaux are as fresh and pertinent today as they were during his own days of the twelfth century. Powerful, pungent, they still carry with them the unction that made penitent and saintly those who first heard them; they are the living embodiment of the art of homiletics: clear, energetic, manly, varied in sentiment, sublime in thought and devotion, inspiring and practical. Bernard's ardor and piquancy stirs the depths of the soul, while his wisodm and instruction informs the mind. His voice is still, but his sermons are living treasures, rich in spiritual power.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ST. BERNARD'S SERMONS

FOR THE

SEASONS & PRINCIPAL FESTIVALS OF THE YEAR

ST. BERNARD'S SERMONS

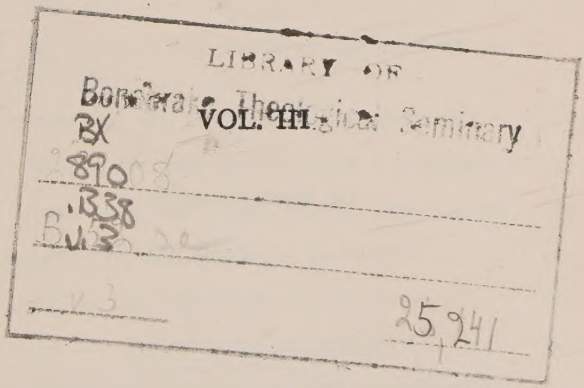
FOR THE

SEASONS & PRINCIPAL FESTIVALS OF THE YEAR

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL LATIN

BY

A PRIEST OF MOUNT MELLERAY



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ST. BERNARD'S SERMONS

SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF ST. MARTIN.

NOVEMBER 11TH.

"O Lord, if I am still necessary to Thy people, I refuse not to labour : let Thy will be done."—Life of St. Martin.

I SUPPOSE it is incumbent on me to preach a sermon to this assembly, particularly as it includes so many prelates whom I rejoice to see present, and who have come hither from afar. It would indeed be much more in accordance with my wishes to hear them discourse ; but since they desire or rather require that I should be the speaker, I must obey their command instead of profiting by their instruction. Yet truly, I have a powerful sermon in the example of their uncommon humility through which—though so far above me in holiness of life, in dignity of rank, and in the possession of wisdom—they have nevertheless condescended to come here, not only for the purpose of paying us a visit, but also from the wish to be edified by my words. This is a most efficacious manner of teaching and a lesson "worthy of all acceptation" (1 Tim. i. 15). For "not in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (1 John iii. 18) they exhort us to be imitators of them as they also are of Christ

(1 Cor. iv. 16), and to learn from them what they have learned of Him : " to be meek and humble of heart " (Matt. xi. 29). It was thus that Mary came to Elizabeth, the Virgin to a married woman, the Queen to the handmaid, the Mother of the Judge to the mother of the Precursor, the Mother of God to the mother of a poor servant. It was thus, too, that Jesus approached John, approached him to be baptised at his hands, for so it became Him " to fulfil all justice " (Matt. iii. 15). Accordingly, Reverend Fathers, you have done nothing unworthy of your dignity in coming hither to-day and in showing yourselves more willing to hear than to speak (James i. 19) even amongst those who rather need to be instructed by you. As for me, although I am not able to fulfil all justice, I shall take care to fulfil at least a part thereof by endeavouring to satisfy your desires : for I am not ignorant that it is a part of justice for the inferior to obey his superiors.

But what shall I take for my subject ? " He that is of the earth, of the earth he is and of the earth he speaketh " (John iii. 31), said that " voice of one crying in the wilderness " (John i. 23). Let me therefore speak of the earth, because of the earth I am and because I live upon the earth. Hear, then, " all ye earth-born and ye sons of men " (Ps. xlviii. 3) : it is to you I am going to speak and of you. On the earth we are born, on the earth we sojourn, on the earth we die, returning thither whence we have been taken. Through a narrow gate we have come into this earthly scene, and here we abide where naught but death is certain. For the whole race of Adam is obliged to " bear the judgment " (Gal. v. 10) which his disobedience merited. His posterity has greatly " increased and multiplied and filled

the earth" (Gen. i. 28). Nevertheless, whether they will or no, and however much they may resist, all men have still to endure the penalty imposed upon their first father. "Earth thou art," said the Lord to Adam, "and into the earth thou shalt go" (Gen. iii. 19).* A heavy doom, indeed, yet tempered with marvellous mercy. It sounds very severe, considered in itself; but it is recognised to be full of clemency the moment we remember the sin that provoked it. For God might have said to the transgressor with equal justice, "Earth thou art and from this moment *under* the earth thou shalt go." Yes, even then the Lord would be just "and exceedingly to be praised" (Ps. xcv. 4). He, I say, would be equally worthy of our praise, but we should no longer be worthy to praise Him. Even then it might be said with truth, "Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgment is right" (Ps. cviii. 137): although we should not have the power to say it. "For hell shall not confess to Thee, neither shall death praise Thee" (Is. xxxviii. 18). "But we that live bless the Lord, from this time now and for ever" (Ps. cxiii. 18). Therefore, O Lord, Thou hast spared Thy creature. Thou hast spared "the glory of Thy name" (Ps. lxxviii. 9, 10). Thou hast not suffered him that was going down from Jerusalem to descend even as far as Jericho (Luke x. 30). But left as I am only half alive in the way, I can do no more than half praise Thee. But where I shall be made wholly alive, there my whole being shall break out in praise of Thee, and all "my bones shall say: Lord, who is like to Thee?"

* "Terra es et in terram ibis," which corresponds to the Greek: "γῆ εἶ, καὶ εἰς γῆν ἀπελεύσῃ." The Vulgate has: "Pulvis es et in pulverem reverteris" ("Dust thou art and into dust thou shalt return").—(Translator.)

(Ps. xxxiv. 10). It is in truth on account of this that " when Thou wast angry Thou didst remember mercy " (Hab. iii. 2), not condemning man to the place of perdition, but only " humbling him in the place of affliction " (Ps. xliii. 20). What reason, O man, hast thou for complaint ? Why dost thou murmur against thy sentence as if it were too severe ? Thou that hast been fashioned from the earth art destined to live upon the earth, so that thy home shall be the element from which thou wast originally compacted.

" Yes," thou wilt answer, " but I should be better satisfied to hear it said to me : ' Spirit thou art and to the home of spirits thou shalt go.' For I am not only earth but spirit also : my soul is a spirit. Neither can there be any doubt that the soul is the more excellent part of my being. I have heard from the Apostle that ' the Lord is a Spirit ' (2 Cor. iii. 17), and from the Lord Himself that ' God is a Spirit ' (John iv. 24). Yea, He is declared to be not only a Spirit but ' the Father of spirits ' (Heb. xii. 9). Wherefore, then, am I held fast by the earth, the mother of all flesh, because I am flesh in part, whereas ' the Father of spirits ' does not receive me at all, although I am likewise in part spirit ? Ah, yes, I understand the reason : it is not the flesh as such that holds me down, but rather ' the flesh of sin ' (Rom. viii. 3)." For just as the sinful spirits occupy the windy space between heaven and earth, whence they are called " the powers of this air " (Ephes. ii. 2) : so do our sins separate us from God (Wisdom i. 3), separate our created spirits from the Creator and " Father of spirits." The earthly body has drawn down to its own native region the spiritual soul, and, lo ! it there prevails over and

oppresses the exile. For the flesh is become as " a talent of lead," but for no other reason save that iniquity is seated upon it (Zach. v. 7, 8). " The body is a load upon the soul " indeed, but only after it has been " corrupted " (Wisdom ix. 15). Now the Apostle testifies that it is corrupted, nay, rather that it is " dead, because of sin " (Rom. viii. 10). Therefore, although it is true that man is a kind of heaven,* and has unquestionably a relation of similitude to the celestial spirits, both in his substance and in his form—in his substance because it is spiritual, in his form because it is rational : nevertheless, these two heavenly properties of his being are not now sufficient to lift him so high as that he may deserve to hear the welcome words : " Because a heaven thou art, to heaven shalt thou go." It is in vain that he prides himself on the faculty of free will, wherewith his soul is endowed, for he is " captivated in the law of sin that is in his members " (Rom. vii. 23). We might perhaps suppose, and reasonably enough, that the one cord of double strand would prevail over the other cord, also of double strand : that if the earth claimed man on the twofold title, as it were, of being his origin and dwelling-place, heaven would have a greater right to admit him as a celestial creature because of the twofold resemblance aforesaid, in substance, namely, and in form, which he bears to the heavenly spirits. But now, by the accession of sin the lower cord which drags him down to earth, has been triplicated. Consequently it cannot easily be broken (Eccles. iv. 12) unless to the other cord also grace is added as a third strand. But when grace

* Cf. *Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles*, vol. i. p. 312 (Mount Melleray Translation).—(Translator.)

has been added, then, beyond a doubt, the cord of iniquity by which we are drawn, yea, rather, which we draw with us, is readily dissolved. For grace mediates between God and our souls, not as a wall of separation, but as a bridge of union, making good the rupture caused by sin.

As for me, therefore, I will go to the mountain of grace and to the hills of mercies, the treasures whereof, as I hear, are all laid up in Christ. I will go to Him Who is "full of grace and truth" (John i. 14), if perchance I may receive something of His fulness (ibid. 16), or rather in the hope that I may be received into that fulness, and so, together with His other members, may increase "unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ" (Ephes. iv. 13). For "no man hath ascended into heaven but He That descended from heaven" (John iii. 13). Oh, He is indeed a most faithful and benevolent Mediator Who, so far from dividing, "hath made both one, breaking down the middle wall of partition" (Ephes. ii. 14), "forgiving us all offences, blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to us; and He hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross; and despoiling the principalities and powers, He hath exposed them confidently in open show, triumphing over them in Himself" (Col. ii. 13-15), and making "peace through the Blood of His cross both as to the things on earth and the things that are in heaven" (Col. i. 20). It was, in fact, on account of this salvation which He had designed to work "in the midst of the earth" (Ps. lxxiii. 12) that He did not immediately thrust man down beneath the earth, as his disobedience deserved, but set him upon

the earth. For we have more cause for hope than for despair whilst as yet we live on the earth and can look up to heaven and receive the " best and perfect gifts from above, coming down from the Father of lights " (James i. 17), from " the Father of spirits," from " the Father of mercies " (2 Cor. i. 3). Indeed it may be said that the reason why the Lord made man upright, as well in body as in soul (Eccles. vii. 30) and turned his face towards the sky—whereas all other animals have their eyes bent downwards upon the earth, was this : in order that having his gaze lifted constantly to the stars, he might long to mount thither, where he beheld so blissful and enduring a mansion.

For is it not a fact that whenever with faith and piety we turn our gaze to the firmament, the very sight of that incomparably luminous region inflames our hearts with the most ardent love and the most eager desire of heaven ? The stars of heaven have nothing in common with the clods of earth. Wide is the difference between the splendour of the sun and the dullness of this clayey mass. Nevertheless, here, too, we may perhaps find many things which appear to be beautiful in their own order : yet earthly beauty is always found allied to ugliness, as gold in the mire, gems in a dunghill, lilies among thorns (Cant. ii. 2). But as for thee, O my heavenly home, " thou art all fair and there is not a spot in thee " (Cant. iv. 7). " Thou art all fair " in thine outward show, " besides that which lieth hid within " (ibid. 3). And what is that ? It consists of the blessed angelic spirits and the souls of the saints who have already been found worthy to enter " into the place of the wonderful tabernacle, even to the house of God " (Ps. xli. 5). For just as

there are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the former far exceeds the glory of the latter: so too are there heavenly spirits and earthly spirits, with a proportionate difference between the glories appertaining to either kind. Angels, Archangels, Virtues, Principalities, Powers, Dominations, Thrones, Cherubim and Seraphim: these are the names of the celestial choirs, and I know them well enough. But perhaps that is the sum of my knowledge regarding those blissful creatures. For how could a mere inhabitant of earth understand anything beyond the names of the citizens of heaven, a carnally-minded man of beings spiritual and divine? However, although I am entirely ignorant as to the hidden meaning of these grand appellatives, I feel absolutely certain of this much: that there must be realities great and wonderful sealed and signified by names so majestic.* Not without reason, assuredly, is the holy city called heaven (*coelum*) since hidden (*celatum*) within it are mysteries so sublime. They are hidden, I say, yet not altogether withdrawn from the vision of faith. For here upon earth we are allowed to behold the exterior beauty of heaven, to which, however, we are not granted access; and with regard to the internal glory of its mysteries also, although not permitted to comprehend, we are nevertheless privileged to hear something concerning them. We can see the homeland, but can only salute it from afar; we enjoy not yet the taste but only the fragrance of its delights.

It was not, therefore, without a wise purpose that "the only-begotten Son Who is in the bosom of the

* For the holy Doctor's interpretation of these names, cf. Sermon XIX on the Canticle of Canticles and *De Consideratione*, l. v. c. 4.

Father" (John i. 18) revealed to our faith, in this "region of the shadow of death" (Is. ix. 2) which we inhabit, the glory of the heavenly spirits, whilst He has made manifest even to our senses the glory of the heavenly bodies. "Hearken, O daughter, and see," He says to the faithful soul (Ps. xliv. 11). The command is obeyed: but what is its purpose? Listen: "Incline thine ear," He continues, "and forget thy people and thy father's house" (ibid.). He desires us to put away our stubborn disobedience, to learn to be submissive, to "embrace discipline" (Ps. ii. 12). He also desires us to "forget the things that are behind" (Phil. iii. 13), to despise the things that are beneath, to renounce the ways of the world and our own domestic vices, to "seek the things that are above" (Col. iii. 1), to "mind the things that are above" (ibid. 2), and to "stretch ourselves forth to those that are before" (Phil. iii. 13). He further desires His noble creature to love and long after the exceeding beauty of His house (Ps. xxv. 8), to the end that she may be "transformed into the same image, from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. iii. 18), and that thus "the King also may desire her beauty" (Ps. xliv. 12) as being now entirely spiritual.

But thou mayest say to me: "How does that which I see of the celestial bodies or that which I hear of the celestial spirits admonish me to incline my ear and to obey? For as to its enkindling in my soul a desire of heaven, that is manifest enough." For answer I bid thee consider how the whole glorious multitude of heavenly bodies are constantly obedient to the Divine Will and in all their continual motions never transgress the limits of time or the bounds of

space appointed them. Remember also that the glorious angelic spirits are said to be " all ministering spirits " (Heb. i. 14) and sent to exercise—I will not say a ministry unworthy of their rank, but a ministry of exceeding condescension. And, nevertheless, thou canst nowhere find in Scripture that any of them at any time either disobeyed Him Who sent them or manifested even the slightest indignation against those to whose service they have been sent and who are so much beneath them. Here, if thou considerest the matter well, thou hast models for thine obedience, and models which ought to be valued the more in proportion to the dignity of the beings in which they are presented. But I know what answer will be murmured against this by " the imagination and thought of man's heart " which are always " prone to evil " (Gen. viii. 21). " What is the good," it will be said to me, " of proposing for my imitation the obedience of the heavenly bodies ? For they are endowed neither with the power of feeling nor with the faculty of free choice ; and with regard to their motion, it seems to be caused by external impulse rather than by any active force in themselves. As for the holy angels, there is just as little use in proposing to me the example of *their* obedience. The angels, it is true, have feeling, yet they are capable of feeling naught but spiritual delight. They are obedient, I grant, to their Creator, but they find the greatest ease and pleasure in submitting their own will to His. Why, then, should they not obey, who ' always see the face of the Father ' (Matt. xviii. 10), wherein consists perfect beatitude, eternal glory, supreme delight ? "

Therefore, O Lord, we truly required and Thou hast

given us examples, in the patriarchs and prophets, of men who were obedient to Thy commands, voluntarily obedient, obedient at the sacrifice of self-will. Thus—to pass over the rest, for it would take too long to make mention of all—we have the example of Abraham who at the command of the Lord went out from his native country (Gen. xii.), cast forth his handmaid and her son (Gen. xxi.), and was ready to immolate his most tenderly loved child, Isaac. Shall even the malice of man be able to derogate from the perfection of such obedience? Perhaps it will be said that "God at sundry times and in divers manners" (Heb. i. 1) appeared to him, was entertained and feasted by him (Gen. xviii.), encouraged him by His words, directed him by His counsels, blessed him with children, glorified him with victories, endowed him with wealth? And what wilt thou have to say when I adduce the example of Christ, "become obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 8) to His heavenly Father? "Much every way" (Rom. iii. 2), thou repliest. "For how shall I presume to emulate the obedience of Christ, the Only-Begotten of the Father, the Power of God and the Wisdom of God? 'He was offered because it was His own will' (Is. liii. 7); He suffered when He willed and as much as He willed to suffer: for He is not only true Man, but also true God. Neither will it be of any avail to remind me of the obedience of the holy apostles. For it is certain that, according to the promise given through Isaias (Is. xxx. 20, 21), with their own eyes they saw their Teacher, and with their own ears they heard His voice admonishing them. Hence one of them, in his Epistle, could express himself thuswise: 'That which was from

the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life' (1 John i. 1). What wonder is it that they left all things for Christ's sake? What wonder that they were willing to follow everywhere the Divine Majesty visibly present to them? For my part, there is nothing I should not be ready to do for God, were the same privilege accorded me. But alas! 'He hath not done in like manner to every nation' (Ps. cxlvii. 9); none before the apostles has He so favoured, nor any one since. For as of old 'many prophets and kings desired to see the things that they—the apostles—saw, and did not see them' (Luke x. 24), so now 'the days have come when we desire to see one day of the Son of man' (Luke xvii. 22) and do not deserve to see it."

Opportunely, therefore, does the example of St. Martin here present itself, so that sinners may be deprived of every excuse. For Martin was a man like ourselves in all things, passible as we are and with the same human sensibility (James v. 17); he lived long after the times of patriarchal and prophetic visions; he was a mere man, possessing nothing of the Divine Nature, but believing, like us, in the God Whom he did not see (John xx. 29). And to-day, full of the fruits of obedience, "rich in virtue" (Ecclus. xliv. 6), he quitted this lower world and mounted to heaven, leaving behind him on earth that which he had from the earth, but rendering back his soul to "the Father of spirits," Whom he had served so faithfully "in the spirit of adoption" (Rom. viii. 15). His body was not a celestial body, neither was his soul a celestial spirit. He was a rational animal, yea, a mortal rational

animal,* earth-sprung, a son of man. On the earth he was born, on the earth he was nurtured, on the earth he was tried and proved, and it was on the earth also that he was consummated. Not even can he be called a patriarch, no, nor one of the prophets, since He Who is Truth Itself has said in the Gospel, " All the prophets and the law prophesied until John " (Matt. xi. 13). Much less was he the Christ Himself, although Christ was truly present in him, not otherwise, however, than by faith (Ephes. iii. 17).

But, my brother, in the same way, " the Word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart " (Deut. xxx. 14), " yet so, if thou seek Him with all thy heart " (Deut. iv. 29): for, according to St. Paul's interpretation, the Word to which Moses here alludes is none other than " the Word of faith " (Rom. x. 8). Hence, in another place also, the same Apostle writes, " Jesus Christ yesterday, to-day, and the Same for ever " (Heb. xiii. 8). " Yesterday," means from the beginning of the world to the Lord's ascension; " to-day " from the ascension to the consummation of the world,† and by " for ever " understand the whole endless duration following the general resurrection. To none of these ages is Christ wanting, neither is Jesus wanting to any: for each of them possesses the unction, to each of them belongs salvation.‡ To the patriarchs and prophets Christ Jesus was revealed in vision, to the apostles in His Humanity, to Martin in

* Cf. the Saint's Treatise on Consideration, p. 42, note (Mount Melleray Translation).—(Translator.)

† St. John speaks of the same period as " the last hour " (1 John ii. 18).

‡ The Saint is alluding to the meaning of the names " Jesus " and " Christ," of which the former signifies " Saviour " or " Salvation," and the latter " Anointed."—(Translator.)

faith, whilst the angels contemplate Him now as He is, in His glory, in which way He has promised to show Himself to all the elect, not indeed " to-day," but in eternity. For " yesterday " had already gone by and this " to-day " of ours had already dawned when the apostles could say, " and if we have known Christ according to the flesh, but now we know Him so no longer " (2 Cor. iv. 16). Nevertheless, it appears as if some of the Flesh of the Paschal Lamb has remained even until this morning of our day. However, that which has been left is now given to the fire, as the law enjoins (Exod. xi. 10), because, namely, although the same Flesh is still offered to us, It is no longer offered in a carnal but only in a spiritual manner (John vi. 64).

Therefore, my brethren, we have no cause to complain that either the visions granted to the fathers of the Old Testament, or the visible presence vouchsafed to the apostles has been withheld from our times. For if we consider the matter carefully we shall recognise that in reality neither of these graces is wanting to us. Have we not the true substance of the Lord's Flesh present in the Sacrament of the altar ? We have our revelations too, " but in power and in the Holy Ghost " (1 Thess. i. 5), " so that nothing is wanting in any grace " (1 Cor. i. 7) to the season of grace, which is the present time. For " eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him. But to us God hath revealed them by His Spirit " (1 Cor. ii. 9, 10). And wonder not, brethren, that He made carnal manifestations of Himself to those who were looking out for His coming in the flesh. As for us, we have need of a stronger grace and a nobler

revelation in proportion as the good we expect is manifestly more excellent.

Accordingly, as already remarked, although our Martin was not the Christ, he nevertheless was not without Christ. He possessed Him, yet not as the angels who live in the presence of His Majesty, nor as the apostles possessed Him, whilst enjoying the sight of His Humanity, not even as the saints of old, to whom "He spoke in vision" (Ps. lxxxviii. 20), but in the manner in which He is now possessed by the Church, that is, in faith and in the Sacrament. Of St. John the Baptist it was said that "he was not the Light (*lux*)" (John i. 8), but was "a burning and a shining lamp (*lucerna*)" (John v. 35). But were I to propose to you him as your model, you would tell me, no doubt, that he is the greatest of men, "a prophet and more than a prophet" (Matt. xi. 9), yea, even the angel of God the Father, as the Father Himself testifies, saying to the Son, "Behold I send My angel before Thy face who shall prepare Thy way before Thee" (Luke vii. 27, Mal. iii. 1). Martin also was "a burning and a shining lamp." And surely there is no reason why you should object to making him your model. Imitate him, therefore, but in what he appears imitable, not in that which appears marvellous in him. Thou art seated to-day at the table of a rich man: therefore, "consider diligently what is set before thy face" (Prov. xxiii. 1). And be sure to distinguish between the meats and the dishes in which they are served; because thou art bidden to make thine own of the former, but not of the latter. The rich man I speak of is Martin, who is rich in merits, rich in miracles, rich in virtues, rich in signs. Therefore,

" consider diligently what is set before thy face," and discriminate between what is merely to be admired and that which may also be imitated. Or perhaps I had better say: consider diligently the food offered thee and the dishes wherein it is served, since in the Sacred Text I find immediately added, " Because it behoveth thee to prepare the like " (ibid., juxta LXX). St. Martin is said to have raised to life three dead persons, the same number as were resuscitated by Christ Himself. He gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, the powers of walking to the crippled, and vigour to the paralysed. By the power of God he escaped from perils, he stopped the progress of a conflagration with the barrier of his own body, he crushed the huge mass of a sacrilegious machine by means of an equally huge column descending from the sky,* he cleansed a leper with a kiss, he cured a paralytic with oil, he vanquished the demons, he had visions of the holy angels, he foresaw the future.

Now why may I not regard these and all the other " highest great things which he hath done " (Ps. lxx. 19) as so many wonderful dishes on the table of this wealthy man, dishes of massive gold and glittering with jewels, precious alike for their material and for their workmanship? Seek not to taste these magnificent objects; be satisfied with admiring their splendour. Let our lamp shine in such marvels so that in his light we may see the Light (Ps. xxxv. 10) Which we have not as yet the power to gaze upon in Its purity and as It is in Itself. For Martin " is not the Light,

* " Immanem sacriligae machinae molem columna parili e coelo descendente prostravit."

but to give testimony of the Light" (John i. 8), to the end that in the meantime, whilst thou art not able to contemplate His glory in all its unclouded splendour, God may appear to thee glorious in His saint. Do not suppose, however, that Martin's lamps are merely trimmed and adorned but empty of oil. No foolish virgin is he: there is plenty of oil in his vessels (Matt. xxv.). His drinking-cups are filled with wine and his dishes contain an abundance of excellent food, spiritual delicacies; so that the poor may have not only what to see and admire, but also wherewith to be nourished and filled,—that the beauty of the dishes may make them praise the Lord, whilst the meats they hold may cause their hearts to live for ever and ever (Ps. xxi. 27). For how is it possible that "the dead shall praise Thee, O Lord" (Ps. cxiii. 17)? Consequently, in order that we may give God "joyful and comely praise" (Ps. cxlvi. 1) in admiration of the grandeurs of His saint, we ought to live by imitating his virtues. On the other hand, if we would with eager appetite partake of the delicacies offered us at this feast, we must not omit to examine carefully the beauty of the dishes wherein they are served. Thus, in the affections of our souls we must keep passing to and fro between the splendour and the heat of our lamp, so that each of these qualities may commend the other and both may appear more pleasing from their mutual comparison. For if our Martin was admirable for his miraculous endowments, he was no less so for his humility of heart and poverty of spirit, as the effects of divine grace in him manifestly prove. For God would never have given His grace in such abundance except to a soul deeply grounded in humility (James iv. 6).

However, I shall now put before you a few incidents from his life as testimonies to his virtue. The blessed Hilary well knew how poor he was in spirit when, after trying in vain to induce him to accept the order of diaconate—Martin loudly protesting his unworthiness of that dignity—he commanded him to be ordained exorcist. In this he seems to have used a certain kind of violence with the holy man, since he foresaw that Martin would by no means refuse the humbler office. He lived the life of the poor, meanly clad, with hair unkempt, and despicable in his appearance. This was in fact brought forward as a disqualification by some ill-disposed persons at his elevation to the episcopal dignity. Nevertheless, as we read in the story of his life, even after being made bishop he continued to live as before, changing nothing whatever in his exterior. In a word, he showed himself so truly poor in spirit that he deserved to be called "the poor and humble Martin." And with regard to his meekness, listen to what his biographer, Sulpitius, says: "He exercised such patience under all kinds of injuries that, bishop though he was, he could be insulted with impunity by the least of his clerics. He never deprived anyone of his office because of injury done to himself, nor, so far as depended on him, was anyone ever for that reason excluded from his friendship." Of this indeed we have conclusive evidence in the case of Brice, as you will all, I think, remember. For out of the whole number of his clergy he made choice of him to be his successor in the episcopal see, and forewarned him of the heavy trials which should befall him in the future. Finally, "he sanctified him in his faith and meekness" (Ecclus. xlv. 4), the same

Brice to whose lips his ear was close when to a visitor asking for the holy bishop the unworthy disciple made answer, " If thou seekest that old dotard, there he is yonder, and as usual looking up at the sky like an idiot." No wonder the man of God had the habit of looking up to heaven, since he despised the earth so utterly. For he knew what I have already told you, that it was for this he was made upright even in his bodily figure ; he knew it was beyond the sky he should look for his treasure ; he knew Christ is seated there at the Father's right hand (Col. iii. 1) ; he knew he could never obtain the satisfaction of his desires until he had mounted thither. Therefore he was not in the least disturbed at being called a dotard on earth, because his conversation was in heaven (Phil. iii. 20) and because he had his eyes in his head, not " in the ends of the earth " (Prov. xvii. 24) like the fool. And we cannot doubt that to heaven also used to ascend the tears which flowed from his eyes in such abundance : for he was accustomed to weep over the sins even of those who sought to injure him.

How much he " hungered after justice " (Matt. v. 6) may be seen from his whole behaviour, but particularly from the zeal with which he pursued the worship of idols, destroying the pagan temples, casting down the images of false gods, and felling the sacred groves. In this war against idolatry he many times courageously exposed his life to peril in order to remove the occasion of so great a sin. How generous was his charity towards the poor the Saviour Himself had experience, as He deigned to boast in presence of His holy angels, showing them the half mantle wherewith Martin had clothed

Him.* God grant that now when he has " gone into the place of the wonderful tabernacle " (Ps. xli. 5), he may there, before the Supreme Judge, exercise in our regard, miserable sinners as we are, that tender compassion through which he rescued of old those doomed to death and condemned to various torments, yea, and is said to have for their sakes prostrated himself at midnight before the door of an earthly judge ! For how shall He refuse now to hear his prayers Who caused them to be listened to then ? The purity of his conscience may be inferred from the fact that " he was not confounded when he spoke to his enemy in the gate " (Ps. cxxvi. 5). For when about to die he thus addressed the demon : " Miserable wretch, thou shalt find in me nothing that is thine : Abraham's bosom is open to receive me." The holy bishop was privileged to close his laborious life by acting as a peace-maker. Although well aware that his end was at hand, he visited certain clerics who were at variance, and having restored peace between them, slept himself in the peace of the Lord.

With regard to the persecutions which he suffered for justice' sake, it would take me too long to recount

* Simplicius Severus, in his beautiful *Life of St. Martin*, gives the following account of this incident : One day, in the middle of a very severe winter, when Martin was still a soldier and not yet baptised, he met outside the city of Amiens a poor beggar, almost naked and trembling from cold, who solicited an alms. The holy youth, having already given away in charity all but his arms and the clothes he was wearing, cut his military cloak in two with his sword, and gave one half to the mendicant. This act of generosity exposed him to the ridicule of his comrades, but Martin did not mind. His reward was not long deferred. During the following night he saw in vision Jesus Christ Himself clothed in the half-mantle he had given the poor man ; he was asked to look at it closely and to say if he recognised it. Then he heard the Lord saying to a troop of angels who bore Him company : " Martin, yet only a catechumen, has clothed Me with this garment."—(Translator.)

them all: how he gave proof of the highest courage in the city of Worms, in the presence of Julian Augustus, whose threatenings seemed only to increase his constancy, and who finally caused him to be put in prison, with the intention of exposing him unarmed on the following day to the fury of the barbarians; how, on another occasion, amidst the Alps, he appeared perfectly tranquil whilst the robber's sword was being brandished over his head; how at Milan the Arian bishop Auxentius persecuted him savagely, loaded him with insults and injuries and at last expelled him from the city; how in another place also where he had zealously denounced the perfidy of certain priests, he was subjected to the cruellest treatment, was even publicly beaten with rods, and then compelled to quit; how, whilst engaged in pulling down a pagan temple, he was attacked by one of the idolaters, sword in hand, and presented his bare neck for the blow, but the heathen, having his weapon raised ready to strike, was suddenly flung on his back; how at another time, when a man attempted to strike him with a ploughshare, the iron flew from the assassin's grip and vanished out of sight. We cannot doubt that by all these dangers to which he exposed himself for Christ's sake he has merited multiplied crowns. For although his martyrdom was never consummated in effect, the devout intention of his will made him many times a martyr. "Eat now, O friends, and drink, and be inebriated, my dearly beloved" (Cant. v. 1); because "man's life is such and the life of your spirit in such things as these" (Is. xxxviii. 16). For unless I mistake it is not those who raise the dead, who give sight to the blind, who heal the sick, who cleanse lepers, who

cure paralytics, who command the demons, who foretell the future, who shine by their multiplied miracles: it is not such that are pronounced blessed by the Word of God, but rather they that are poor in spirit, they that are meek, they that mourn, they that hunger and thirst after justice, they that are merciful and clean of heart, the peace-makers, and they that suffer persecution for justice' sake (Matt. v. 3-10).

But now, my brethren, I must crave your pardon. For I have turned aside somewhat from the subject of obedience, of which virtue in particular it was my design to present you with examples from the history of St. Martin. And I have, moreover, detained you longer than usual. However, I think "it is good for us to be here" (Matt. xvii. 4); besides, we were to-day very slow in coming to Martin. "O Lord," exclaimed the holy bishop, as he lay dying, "if I am still necessary to Thy people, I refuse not to labour: let Thy will be done." Oh, how truly perfect was his soul in sanctity! How inestimable his charity! How unparalleled his obedience! "Thou hast fought a good fight, thou hast finished thy course, thou hast kept the faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for thee a crown of justice which the Lord, the just Judge, will deliver to thee on this day" (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8): and still dost thou say, "I refuse not to labour; let Thy will be done"! Oh, surely now thou hast immolated thine Isaac! Thou hast slain, so far as it depends on thee, that only one of thine whom thou lovest with such tenderness! Thou hast sacrificed to God with the devotion of piety the supreme joy and hope of thy heart, declaring thyself ready to return to danger, to resume the conflict, to submit again to labours, tribulations, and trials; yea,

willing to be excluded yet awhile from the happiness of heaven and from the long-coveted society of the blessed spirits above—to be brought back again to the sorrows of this mortal existence from the very portals of paradise, lastly—which is the hardest of all—to remain still " exiled from the Lord " (2 Cor. v. 6), should that be His good pleasure. There can be no doubt that he who shows himself eager to obey before the command is given merits more grace than another whose obedience is only manifested after the obligation has been imposed. Admirable in truth is your obedience, holy angels of God. But you will not be angry with me if I venture to express a doubt as to whether there could be found amongst you a single one who would be willing to be sent forth on a ministry in which it would be no longer possible to see the Father's face. Noble and generous didst thou prove thyself, O blessed Peter, in that thou didst leave all things to follow Christ (Matt. xix. 27). Yet I hear thee exclaiming on the holy mount, where He was transfigured before thee and thy companions, " Lord, it is good for us to be here if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles "(Matt. xvii. 4). These are very unlike the words of Martin, " Lord, if I am still necessary to Thy people, I refuse not to labour." Thy heart was ready, O Martin, thy heart was ready (Ps. cvii. 2) either " to abide still in the flesh " or " to be dissolved and to be with Christ " (Phil. i. 23, 24).

Thou didst show wonderful confidence amid the terrors of approaching death, and gavest proof of high perfection in thy longing to see Christ, a longing that was ardent to an extraordinary degree : but the most admirable thing of all and in every sense was this,

that thou who hadst no fear of death, yea, who wast consumed with so great a desire for the presence of thy Lord, nevertheless wast willing to live also and to endure still longer the weariness and the pain of hope deferred. My brethren, in what could he have shown himself disobedient who even in such straits had the virtue to cry out, " Thy will be done " ? Let this, therefore, be our portion in the feast of to-day. Let us " consider diligently " this example of perfect obedience set before us on the table of our poor—or rather, as I should now say, of our rich host, remembering that it is this and nothing else which shall be required of us, that it is this which we are obliged to prepare, so that each one of us may say with the Psalmist, " I am ready and am not troubled, that I may keep Thy commandments " (Ps. cxviii. 60): not for once, not merely in part, but always and absolutely " my heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready," ready to rejoice or to suffer, without making the least resistance to whatsoever Thou shalt ordain. It may be that I feel a particular and very eager desire for repose: nevertheless I refuse not to labour, if such be Thy good pleasure. " As it shall be the will of God in heaven, so be it done " (1 Mac. iii. 60). I long for rest, but " I refuse not to labour: let Thy will be done." Amen.

SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF ST. CLEMENT.

November 23rd.

"*When thou shalt sit to eat with a prince consider diligently what is set before thy face, for it is necessary that thou shouldst prepare the like.*"—Prov. xxiii. 1, juxta LXX.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Ps. cxv. 15). Let "the sinner hear and be angry," let him "gnash his teeth and pine away" (Ps. cxi. 10). He has been caught in his own craftiness (Job v. 13), "he has fallen into the pit he made" (Ps. vii. 16), he has entangled himself in the snare which he hath set for us (Ecclus. xxvii. 29). For it was "by the envy of the devil death came into the world" (Wisdom ii. 24), and now, behold: "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." Listen, therefore, thou enemy of life; thou author of death give ear. What has thy craft profited thee? or how have we been hurt by thy cunning? Nay, rather, we have benefited, that thou mayest be tormented the more, because "to them that love God all things work together unto good, to such as according to His purpose are called to be saints" (Rom. viii. 28). For it was no otherwise than by his bodily death—which is thy handiwork—that the holy Martyr whose festival we are keeping to-day triumphed over thee. He made a virtue out of necessity, he changed what was the penalty of sin into a title to eternal glory: he proved himself faithful in a little thing in order that he might be found worthy to be placed over many things (Matt.

xxv. 21). For whatever that blessed soul had already received was little in truth and very little as compared with the glory which has been the reward of the martyr's sufferings. All the delights that could be found in this world, and all the glory that it has to give, and all that may appear in it in any way desirable, ought surely to be regarded as little in comparison with the felicity, the glory, the beatitude of the blessed: if indeed such transitory things deserve to be called even little and not rather nothingness and smoke that vanishes almost as soon as it appears. The blessed Clement enjoyed the temporal advantages of illustrious descent, ample possessions, a rich patrimony, and such vast erudition that he was reputed one of the most eminent philosophers of his time. All these things he had received of the Lord. For the goods of nature and fortune are the gifts of God, quite as much as the goods of grace. Therefore, he proved himself faithful to the Benefactor to Whom he owed everything by despising everything for His love, and by "counting all things to be but loss and esteeming them as dung that he might gain Christ" (Phil. iii. 8).

But perhaps the enemy is not satisfied even yet, and begins to murmur, "Skin for skin and all that a man hath he will give for his life" (Job ii. 4). What then? Deemest thou that when there is question of sacrificing his bodily life he will be found unfaithful to the Lord from Whom he received it, so as to prefer at least that to His love? "Behold he is in thy hand" (ibid. 6). Command thy satellites to rush upon him and to reduce him to such straits that he shall be under the necessity of either renouncing his allegiance to the Lord or of losing his corporal life. Devise various and

cruel kinds of torture: but remember that thou art only fashioning crowns for our Martyr. For just as he has already despised the ornaments and the supports of this earthly existence, so does he now despise that existence itself. He offers thee his body to kill, he flouts thee to thy face, with his sacred lips he denounces thine idols, and even in the midst of his torments he openly proclaims and generously confesses the Lord his God. He shall be crowned, consequently, because he has "lawfully striven" (2 Tim. ii. 5), because he has faithfully conquered, because neither the pleasures of this world nor the fear of death could separate him from the charity of Christ (Rom. viii. 35). Come, tell us now, I beseech thee, O blessed soul, that didst thus abandon thy body to torments, tell us, I pray thee, hadst thou or hadst thou not any affection for that body? "Yes, indeed," she replies, "I loved it truly; 'for no man ever hated his own flesh' (Ephes. v. 29). I loved my body, therefore, but not supremely: I loved it as my slave; I loved it far less than I loved my Lord and God. And since the sincerity of love is only proved by deeds, I gladly sacrificed even the life of my flesh to His glory."

What say we to this, brethren? We felicitate the martyr on his triumph, but the thought of his glory ought to cover us with confusion. For the blessed Clement "was a man passible like unto us" (James v. 17), "encompassed with infirmity" (Heb. v. 2) like unto us, and like unto us attached to his body by the bonds of natural affection. Therefore, if he thus glorified Christ in his body (1 Cor. vi. 20) and took the chalice of salvation (Ps. cxv. 13), it is pertinent to ask: what have *we* rendered to the Lord for all the

things that He hath rendered to us (ibid. 12)? He has stamped His image upon us as upon Clement, He has redeemed us with the same Blood, He has called us to the same inheritance, "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that cannot fade, reserved in heaven" (1 Peter i. 4). Why, then, cannot we, like holy Clement, drink the chalice of Christ (Matt. xx. 23)? But perchance some here would answer me: "Yes, we could drink of that chalice, but we are not given the opportunity; for the days of persecution have gone by." Now, to be candid, I should not give much credit to persons speaking thus. Why should I? You daily show that you cannot endure to be pricked with the point of a needle, and do you think you would prove more courageous at the point of the sword? Let your conduct in the small combats that belong to every day prove to us with what courage you would behave in more serious encounters. It is true, no one says to us now, "Sacrifice to idols and you shall live; refuse, and you shall be put to death with divers torments." But the reason is that the Lord "knoweth our frame" (Ps. cii. 14), and refuses to expose us to so difficult a trial. He did expose Clement to that dangerous ordeal in order that he might triumph over the wicked one and to let him "know that wisdom is mightier than all" (Wisdom x. 12).

But for ourselves, brethren, what kind of conflict have we to engage in? Let me tell you. Every day we can each one of us hear in his heart the voice of the tempter whispering, "Sow discord amongst thy brethren, murmur against authority, speak ill of thy neighbour, grow lax in thy observance of rule, sham

sickness, give vent to thy feelings by replying to him who may happen to reprove thee somewhat harshly." He does not now say to anyone, " Unless thou wilt do this, thou shalt die," but at the most, " It will be too difficult and painful for thee to resist thine inclinations," or, "Who would be willing to bear such a burden?" It is words like these we are wont to hear uttered in the depths of our hearts, and the same we give in answer to the exhortations addressed to us either externally by a human superior or internally by the Holy Ghost. Now, if we are often in danger of defeat, even in such slight combats, if we offer but a feeble resistance, if we sometimes give way entirely : what would become of us if exposed to the dread ordeal of martyrdom ? If the stroke of a reed is too much for our weakness, what stand should we make before death-dealing darts ? You see, my brethren, how we are " brought to nothing " (Ps. lxxii. 22), and how, like women and children, we can only applaud those who are fighting, being unable to fight ourselves. But what are we to do ? For, as you know, we have all been invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Apoc. xix. 9), and it is not lawful for any to appear empty-handed before Him (Deut. xvi. 16). Let us, therefore, " consider diligently what is set before our face, because it is necessary for us to prepare the like " (Prov. xxiii. juxta LXX). Thus the blessed Clement took notice that wine was set before him at the table of the Lord, and so he also, as being a rich man, brought wine to the wedding feast by the effusion of his own blood. But as for us we are poor, O Lord, and we have no wine. " Fill the water-pots with water " (John ii. 7), He makes

answer. Are we then to understand that this water will be accepted if we bring it? Most assuredly. For he shall find water as well as wine set before him, whosoever, according to the counsel of the Wise Man, "considers diligently what is set before his face" by Him, that is, Who came "not by water only but by water and blood" (1 John v. 6). "He that saw it hath given testimony" (John xix. 35) to the fact that, when the soldier opened the side of the Lord as He slumbered on the cross, "immediately there came out Blood and water" (ibid. 34).

For ourselves, therefore, dearest brethren, in order to show that we are faithful to our God, as we have not the martyrdom or testimony—these words mean the same—of blood, let us endeavour to have at least the testimony of water, for not even that will the Lord disdain. "There are three that give testimony on earth, the Spirit, the water, and the blood" (1 John v. 8). Happy the man who can boast of the triple testimony! For "a threefold cord is not easily broken" (Eccles. iv. 12). We have not the testimony of the blood: let us try at any rate to have the Spirit and the water. And observe that without the Spirit neither the blood nor the water will suffice us; whilst, on the other hand, if the Spirit should be found in us without either the blood or the water, His testimony alone will be quite enough. For He is the "Spirit of truth" (John xiv. 17), and the water and the blood of themselves avail nothing, but it is the Spirit That giveth testimony in them. Nevertheless, it is my opinion that the Spirit can very seldom, if indeed at all, be found without either the water or the blood. Consequently, most dearly beloved, let us who lack the blood, strive

to have at least the water. And since I have just made mention of the water-pots, let us seek those two or three measures which the water-pots are said to contain (John ii. 6). For Christ also has set before us three measures of water, and whosoever amongst us imitates Him in this, that is, in providing the three-fold measure, shall be perfect (Matt. x. 25). The reason on account of which it is said disjunctively " two or three measures " I take to be this : that we may understand that two measures at least are absolutely necessary, but that the third shall not be required of all.

Let me now explain what are the three measures of water which the Saviour has set before us. He wept over Lazarus and over the city of Jerusalem : behold the first measure of water. When the hour of His passion was at hand, perspiration broke out from Him : this is the water of the second measure, flowing forth not merely from His eyes but from His whole Body. But it has a ruddy hue, resembling the colour of blood, according to what is written, " And His sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground " (Luke xxii. 44). With regard to the third measure, that is the water which, as I said awhile ago, issued forth from His side together with the Blood. Therefore, thou also, my brother, hast the first measure, if with thy tears thou waterest the couch of thy conscience (Ps. vi. 7) and with the sorrow of holy compunction washest out the stains of thy past sins. And thou hast the second as well, if in the sweat of thy brow thou eatest thy bread (Gen. iii. 19), if thou chastisest thy body by penitential toil, and restrainest the motions of carnal concupiscence. This water will be found to have a sanguine tint, whether on account of the labour

that produces it, or because of the fire of passion which it serves to extinguish. If now, after attaining thus far, thou canst proceed a step further, even to the grace of devotion, thou shalt be " given the water of wholesome wisdom to drink " (Ecclus. xv. 3), and the Spirit of Christ, " sweet above honey " (Ecclus. xxiv. 27), shall become in thee " a fountain of water springing up into life everlasting " (John iv. 14). And remember this is the water which issued from the Heart of the dead Christ, and flowed out without any sense of pain. Therefore, whoso would experience the delight of this crowning grace must already have died to the world. In conclusion I will repeat in a few words what I have been saying about these waters : the first measure cleanses the conscience from the sins of the past, the second protects from future sins by extinguishing the fire of concupiscence, the third refreshes the thirsting souls of such as deserve to receive it.

SERMON FOR THE VIGIL OF THE FEAST OF ST. ANDREW.

November 29th.

" O cross so long desired, and ready now at last for the soul that pines for thee! Behold I come to thee with confidence and joy: do thou also embrace me with gladness."—Acts of St. Andrew.

My brethren, the authority of our holy fathers makes it obligatory upon us to observe a solemn religious fast on the vigils of the principal festivals: a most useful institution, beyond doubt, which " shall not be reputed as folly in us " (Ps. xxi. 3) by him at least whosoever takes the trouble to consider the matter carefully. For we are daily guilty of numerous infidelities and " in many things we all offend " (James iii. 2). Hence it would not be at all safe for us to enter upon the celebration of sacred solemnities, especially of those that are highest in dignity, without having first purified our souls by abstinence, so that we may be found more worthy and more capable of receiving a communication of spiritual joy. Thus " the just man is his own accuser in the beginning of his words " (Prov. xviii. 17, juxta LXX), nor does he commence to recount the praises of others before he has reproved himself. But if even the just man quakes with terror at the thought of appearing before Him Who " will judge justices " (Ps. lxxiv. 3), what shall *we* do whose sins have not yet been either judged and punished by penance or covered by charity? (Ps. xxxi. 1). There

is much reason to fear lest perhaps they should become "manifest, going before us to judgment" (1 Tim. v. 24). And if the just man presumes not to celebrate the glory of the saints without due reverence and a certain feeling of embarrassment, how much less the sinner in whose mouth, as the Scripture says, "praise is not seemly" (Ecclus. xv. 9)? Must he not be in constant apprehension of hearing himself addressed in the words, "Why dost *thou* declare My justice?" (Ps. xlix. 16), or in these, "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having on a wedding garment?" (Matt. xxii. 12). Happy, then, are they who are constantly solicitous to preserve their robe—I mean, the glory of their conscience—free from stain and always shining. But because only very few thus guard their hearts with all vigilance, whilst fewer still—if yet even a few can be found—preserve them in perfect holiness, it becomes necessary to wash away by frequent fasting our all but inevitable defilements, particularly when we are preparing for the celebration of some of the more principal festivals.

But the observance of a fast on the vigil is intended not only as a preparation for the morrow's feast, it is also designed to give us an important admonition and instruction. For it serves to teach us what is the true road to the everlasting festivity. And wherefore, indeed, should we anticipate with a fast the solemnities of the saints, if it be not to remind ourselves "that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts xiv. 21)? For does not he prove himself undeserving to participate in the festive joys who refuses to keep the fast of the vigil? Yes, undoubtedly, if thou art unwilling to afflict thy soul on the vigil,

thou shalt rightly be held unworthy to share in the peace and gladness of the festival. Now the whole of this present time of penance may be regarded as the vigil of the grand solemnity, the eternal sabbath for which we hope. And if thou considerest the unending duration of that festival, thou wilt not complain that the vigil is too long. For although prolonged festivities are wont to demand preparation proportionately prolonged, the everlasting festivity requires from us no more than a temporal preparation. But whither am I being led by the joyous thought of that immortal felicity?—for such is the name more usually and perhaps more properly given to the celestial feast. At any rate, let us now come back to the subject of our present discourse.

The reason, then, of to-day's fast, and the motive of the joyous solemnity for which we are preparing, is the glorious martyrdom of the Apostle St. Andrew. It seems only right that, since we cannot share with him in the torments of crucifixion, we should at least share in his fast. For there can be no doubt that during the two days whilst he hung upon the cross he also abstained from every kind of food. Let us therefore be found, even in some slight way, participating in his sufferings, if not his companions on the gibbet of the cross, at least his companions in the affliction of his abstinence; so that, through the mercy of God, we may be accounted worthy to participate in his eternal reward hereafter, and to share even to-morrow in the spiritual joys of his feast. How indeed can we help rejoicing at the recollection of his triumph when we know that he himself exulted with an excess of gladness during the very time of his torments?

How can that festival be otherwise than joyous in which even the cross itself becomes a subject of joy? For we commonly use the word "festive" only to designate something that is joyous, and the very name "cross" is derived from that of a most cruel kind of torture, or rather the name of this torture is derived from the name "cross." Therefore, with what "exultation of the whole earth" (Ps. xlvii. 3) should not so unheard of a miracle, so magnificent an effect of divine power, be celebrated! Andrew "was a man passible like unto us" (James v. 17), and nevertheless he thirsted for the cross with such vehement ardour of spirit, and rejoiced with a joy unparalleled in the history of the world when at last he descried it awaiting him in the distance! "O cross," he exclaimed, "so long desired, and ready now at last for the soul that pines for thee! Behold I come to thee with confidence and joy: do thou also embrace me with gladness." You see, my brethren, how he is almost beside himself from the excess of his happiness. "Do thou also embrace me with gladness," he cries. Is the joy, then, so abounding that the cross itself rejoices, and so fully that it is rather wholly converted into joy than has joy by participation? Or shall anyone say that it is less extraordinary, less above reason, less beyond nature for the crucified to rejoice than for the cross? To the latter nature denied the capacity of feeling joy; and so far as it could prevail in the former, it banished every sense of delight and produced only feelings of anguish. Yet hear how he addresses the cross: "I have always been thy lover," he exclaims, "and I have ardently longed to embrace thee." Brethren, is not that a flaming fire rather than

a speaking tongue? Or if you insist that it is a tongue, it is at any rate a fiery tongue. His words are so many sparks of that fire which the Lord "from above hath sent into his bones" (Jer., Lam. i. 13). And would to God they were "desolating coals" (Ps. cxix. 4), consuming and burning out everything that we have within us of carnal affection! But if the sparks are so glowing, how great must be the interior furnace whence they are given off!

Truly, O blessed Andrew, truly thy faith "is as a mustard-seed" (Matt. xvii. 19) in that it begins to give out from itself so unexpected an amount of heat the moment it begins to be pressed. What if it were subjected to a little more pressure? Could any mind endure the ardour wherewith it would then begin to glow? or could any ear endure the fiery words that would then be emitted? Thus, so long as the tyrant Aegeas was comparatively mild in his menaces our grain of mustard-seed appeared contemptible enough: it was still unbroken and we knew not what was concealed within. "The Lord hath sent me to this province," he said, "where I have acquired for Him a numerous people." Let the pestle of minatory language be now employed. Immediately his fervour waxes warmer and his words more courageous. Aegeas expects to see him cowed by the threat of crucifixion, but he is doomed to disappointment. The soul of the blessed Apostle is only the more inflamed at this, and he boldly replies, "If the torment of the cross had any terrors for me, I should never have preached the glory of the cross." But when he sees the cruel gibbet ready for him, the sight sets him wholly on fire: he loudly voices his

admiration for it, he addresses it in terms of endearment, such as lovers are wont to use to their beloved, he salutes it with the utmost reverence, he welcomes it most devoutly, he extols it in magnificent terms, he glories in proclaiming its grandeurs, and cries out more with the affection of his heart than with his lips, " Hail, O precious cross, that hast derived beauty and loveliness from the sacred members of the Lord! Hail to thee, O cross, that hast been consecrated by contact with the Body of Christ and adorned as with pearls from His all holy Limbs ! " Justly, therefore, is that lover of the cross venerated by all the servants of the cross. But he has a right to look for greater devotion from those who have more particularly engaged themselves to take up their own cross. It is to you, my brethren, I say this and with reference to you. For you have not turned a deaf ear to the trumpet tones of that evangelical voice, " Whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple " (Luke xiv. 27). Be ready, then, to devote your mind with all diligence to the morrow's solemnity and to celebrate the same with your whole heart. For I assure you there is a rich treasure of consolation and encouragement laid up in that festival for such of you as will take the trouble to dig and to explore.

FIRST SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF ST. ANDREW.

NOVEMBER 30TH.

" Charity is patient, is kind. . . . Charity n ver falleth away." —1 Cor. xiii. 4, 3.

To-day, dearest brethren, whilst celebrating the glorious triumph of the blessed Apostle Andrew, " we exulted and were delighted " (Ps. lxxxix. 14) " at the words of grace that proceeded from his mouth " (Luke iv. 22). For there could be no room for sorrow where the Martyr himself so greatly rejoiced. None of us could feel compassion for one who suffered so cheerfully, none of us dared lament for one who rejoiced in his torments. Had we done so, he might with just reason have said to us what the Saviour, carrying His cross, said to those who followed and wept for Him, " Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children " (Luke xxiii. 28). For when the Blessed Andrew was being led forth to be crucified, the people, who grieved to see the just and holy man unjustly condemned, wished to prevent his martyrdom ; but he, with most earnest entreaties, prevailed upon them not to disappoint him of his crown, nay, rather, not to disappoint him of his sufferings. He " desired to be dissolved and to be with Christ " (Phil. i. 23), but on the cross which he had always loved so dearly : he desired indeed to enter His kingdom, but by the way of the gibbet. Hear him addressing the object of his affections: "O cross," he

says, "let Him Who hath saved me by thee receive me also by thee." Therefore, if we truly love him we ought to rejoice with him, not only because he is crowned, but also because he is crucified: for the Lord "hath given him his heart's desire and hath not withholden from him the will of his lips. . . . He hath set on his head a crown of precious stones" (Ps. xx. 3, 4). Nevertheless, whilst we congratulate the holy Apostle on his happiness in having attained at last to the embraces of the cross for which he has yearned so long, I shall be much surprised if we do not also feel astonished at the gladness of him whom we felicitate.

Do you suppose, my brethren, that during the office of matins last night, whilst we sang with such consolation the holy Martyr's expressions of exulting jubilee—do you suppose it likely that there was none amongst us who thought and spoke thus in his heart: "What is the meaning of this? Whence proceeds this joy so unheard of? Am I, then, to understand that the cross is something precious? that the cross can become the object of love? that the cross is capable of yielding such transports of delight?" Even so, dearest brethren. Provided there is some soul willing to gather in its produce, the tree of the cross always brings forth the fruits of life, always yields a store of heavenly joys, always exudes "the oil of gladness" (Ps. xliv. 8) and the precious balsam of spiritual grace. No barren forest-tree is the tree of the cross; rather it is "a tree of life to them that lay hold on it" (Prov. iii. 18). It is a fruitful tree, and the fruit that it bears is the fruit of salvation. Otherwise, how should it have been allowed to occupy the earth of the Lord's Body

(Luke xiii. 7)—that most noble earth to which it was firmly rooted by the fastenings of the nails? Had it not been more excellent than all other trees, more fruitful than all other trees, it surely would never have been planted in that most precious garden, never suffered to cumber the soil of that peerless vineyard. But what wonder is it that He Who imparted sweetness to raging fire imparted the same to the wood of the cross? Or how can the cross seem bitter when the very fire is found possessed of so sweet a savour? Oh, how delightful to the Martyr Laurence must have been the flames that consumed him, since he could so laugh at his torturers and mock at his judge! What shall we say to this, brethren? How is it that *we* can find no relish in the sufferings we endure for Christ's sake, that we never get a taste of the "hidden manna" (Apoc. ii. 17)? Would it were otherwise with us! For then the devil would have been entirely vanquished and would no longer have any power to tempt us. That one grace would be sufficient to protect us against the twofold malice of Satan.

For that most wicked one is provided with snares and also with darts, as being the crafty hunter of men, who thirsts for naught save the blood of souls. Some he assails with the darts of malicious suggestions of all kinds, and in this way he succeeds in wounding many who are weak in patience. Others he strives to catch with the snare of sensual pleasure, and thus are caught a countless multitude of those that either creep upon the earth or fly close to its surface. Therefore let us place our delight in tribulation, and then the malignant one shall no longer have any power either to seduce or to discourage us: we shall be secure both

from "the snare of the hunters and from the sharp word" (Ps. xc. 3). For "the enemy shall have no advantage over him" (Ps. lxxxviii. 23) who rejoices in the cross of Christ, if he attempts to seduce him with carnal pleasures; "nor shall the son of iniquity have power to hurt him" (ibid.), no matter with how much bitterness he may fill his soul in his efforts to break down his courage. The man who finds strength and consolation in his fasting will have but little regard for the delights of the flesh; and much less will he murmur against that in which he rejoices. Such a one, undoubtedly, "hath made the Most High his refuge" (Ps. xc. 9), where he need have no fear of either the enemy's snares or arrows. Nay, rather he is a "clean fish," furnished with both fins * and scales. Now, just as "the net is spread in vain before the eyes of them that have wings" (Prov. i. 17), so equally in vain is the dart hurled at them that are covered with scaly armour. We have the authority of the law (Lev. xi. 9, 10, Deut. xiv. 9) for regarding as clean fishes such as have both fins wherewith to lift and balance themselves and scales for their protection, whether they be found in the sea, or in the river, or in the pool. "For even this great and spacious sea" (Ps. ciii. 25) contains some clean fishes, fit for the table of the Lord, since out of the multitude of those who wear the livery of this world and pass their lives in its wide-extended ocean, the Lord has reserved unto Himself many thousands. These are all enclosed in the apostolic net, and shall be separated from the bad

* "Pinnulas," "little feathers" or "little wings," hence fins. The two meanings are combined in this and the following paragraphs in a manner quite impossible to represent in English.—(Translator.)

fish as soon as the net is drawn out of the water (Matt. xiiii. 47, 48). Then assuredly our "fisher of men" (Matt. iv. 19) shall "sit by the shore" (Matt. xiii. 48) to which he is now drawing after him the whole of Achaia.* The river likewise has its clean fishes, all those, namely, who "are found faithful among dispensers" (1 Cor. iv. 2). By the river is meant the order of Gospel preachers who, instead of abiding always in the same place, spread themselves abroad and overrun the whole earth, to irrigate with the waters of grace its various regions. And in the pool also are found clean fishes, that is, cloistered souls, who serve God "in spirit and in truth" (John iv. 23). For the pool may justly be regarded as typifying monasteries wherein the fish are confined and prevented from wandering at large, so that they may be always ready for the spiritual table, each one saying to himself, "When will the Lord come and take me out of this? All the days in which I am now in warfare I expect until my change come" (Job xiv. 14).

Now, as I have already reminded you, the law declares those fishes to be clean which have both fins and scales. The scales are very numerous, but they form one coat of mail: for patience, which they symbolise, is but a single virtue, although it appears manifold through its being exercised in divers tribulations. And just as the scales are to be understood as signifying patience, so, it seems to me, the fins can be referred not unreasonably to cheerfulness. For

* St. Andrew suffered at Patras, in Achaia, being nailed to an X-shaped cross, called the "cross decussate," whereon he is said to have survived two whole days. The narrative known as the Acts of St Andrew, from which St. Bernard frequently quotes, is of doubtful authenticity.—(Translator.)

cheerfulness of mind lifts us up and sustains us, so that the man of cheerful disposition appears always in a sense to be soaring heavenwards. But in order to have double fins we must find two kinds of cheerfulness. And possibly that is the reason why St. Paul—who beyond a doubt possessed the double fins since he was able to lift himself even to the third heaven and to sail into paradise (2 Cor. xii. 2-4)—that, I say, is the reason why St. Paul tells us not only to "glory in hope" (Rom. v. 2) but to "glory also in tribulations" (ibid. 3). Certainly *he* can leap to lofty heights, whosoever he may be that so rejoices as well in the endurance of present evils as in the expectation of future rewards, that he even makes these things the subject of his glorying. Such a one I have found the blessed Apostle Andrew to be, such he offers himself to my contemplation, and such therefore I present him to you in my sermon to-day.

Here, it may be well to remind you, brethren, that there are three stages or degrees in the spiritual life, the stage of beginners, the stage of proficients, and the stage of the perfect. Now, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ecclus. i. 16), hope in the Lord is progress in wisdom, whilst charity is the consummation thereof,—as the Apostle insinuates where he says, "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. xiii. 10). He that is yet but beginning in fear carries the cross of Christ with patience; he that has gone forward to hope, carries it with contentment; but he that is made perfect in love, embraces the cross with the eagerness and the ardour of delight. For it is only the last who can say to the cross like the blessed Andrew, "I have always been

thy lover and I have ardently longed to embrace thee." Far removed from such fervour is the disposition of him who bears his burden resignedly enough, yet would wish, if it could be so, that he had not "come unto this hour" (John xii. 27). Very unlike the voice of St. Andrew is that of Him Who prayed, "My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me" (Matt. xxvi. 39)—if it be not considered irreverent to say so. Yet why should it, since the Lord had then mounted the ass's colt * (Mark xi. 7), so that not even *he* might be left in the hands of the enemy? Yes, I recognise in the emperor the trembling that belongs to his faint-hearted soldiers, I recognise in the physician the voice of his patient, I behold the mother-bird sharing the weakness of her little ones. Such charity engages all my attention, such compassion overpowers me with astonishment, such condescension makes me fearful. It was in truth because He was so merciful that the Lord did not meet His passion with the same unflinching fortitude as the blessed Andrew: for "not they that are in health need a physician, but they that are ill" (Matt. ix. 12). And if anyone takes scandal at this condescension, he surely deserves to be asked, "Is thy eye evil because I am good?" (Matt. xx. 15). For to such a one the odour of life is in truth unto death (2 Cor. ii. 16).

What wonder would it have been, Lord Jesus, if when that hour came for which Thou wast born into the world, Thou hadst shown Thyself full of fortitude,

* That is to say, He allowed Himself to be overcome by the natural repugnance to suffering and death, for the encouragement of imperfect souls, of such, namely, as are not yet inured to the yoke and fortified by habits of virtue, and thus comparable to unbroken, liberty-loving colts Cf. A Lapide on Matt. xxi. 7.—(Translator.)

since Thou hadst power to lay down Thy life and no man was able to take it from Thee (John x. 18)? Far more glorious was it—considering that everything was done for our sakes—to conduct Thyself in such a manner that not alone the sufferings of Thy Body but also the feelings of Thy Heart should serve to promote our interests: that as Thy death vivified us, so should Thy fears fortify us, Thy sadness rejoice us, Thy weariness refresh us, Thy agitation calm us, Thy desolation console us. I read, it is true, how at the resurrection of Lazarus He "groaned in the spirit and troubled Himself" (John xi. 33). But since it is said that He "troubled Himself" we must regard this perturbation as due, not to the necessity of His condition, but to the free choice of His will. Now, however, I am told something more extraordinary. For that charity which is said to be "strong as death" (Cant. viii. 6) so prevailed against Christ that an angel of God was needed to strengthen Him. Who was this strengthener? and whom did he strengthen? Let the Evangelist answer the first question: "There appeared to Him an angel from heaven strengthening Him" (Luke xxii. 43). But who is this whom the Angel appeared to and strengthened? The Same Who was born of a virgin Mother without prejudice to her integrity, Who by an act of His will changed water into wine, Who cleansed leprosy by His touch, Who walked upon the sea as on a firm pathway, Who with a word restored the dead to life, Who, finally, "upholdeth all things by the word of His power" (Heb. i. 3), the Same by Whom all things were made (John i. 3) and by Whom all subsist, even the Angel that appeared to strengthen Him. What more shall I say? Who is

He? I should not have taken so long to answer were He not absolutely unspeakable. Let me say, then, that the Angel appeared to strengthen that Majesty Which not even he could comprehend.

Tell me, I pray thee, holy Angel, Whom art thou consoling? Or dost thou not know Who He is Whom thou hast come to strengthen? For He is Himself a Consoler, He is Himself a Paraclete. Otherwise, surely, He would not have said to the apostles that the Father would send them *another* Paraclete (John xiv. 16); He would not have spoken thus unless He were Himself also a Paraclete. Nay, in this very manifestation of weakness in which He requires to be consoled by His creature, I acknowledge Him to be the greatest of Paracletes, the kindest of Paracletes, Who is ever "nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart" (Ps. xxxiii. 19). For now, O Lord, I shall not despair, even though the tribulation which I suffer is exceedingly grievous, even though my heart fails me, even though I desire that the chalice should pass from me. I shall not despair, I repeat, provided I too shall have the grace to add, "Nevertheless, not as I will but as Thou wilt" (Matt. xxvi. 39). I have also learned from Thy example to seek in my troubles not carnal or worldly consolation but angelic, and spiritual, and heavenly. Accordingly, even when I am so dispirited as to need consolation, I do not thereby refuse the chalice, provided I do not murmur against it; for murmuring, unless immediately repressed, would entirely separate me from Thee. What? I recognise the accents of my own voice in the speech of the Saviour, and shall I despair of salvation? No, certainly not; but rather "in my patience I shall possess my soul" (Luke xxi. 19).

However, I will strive to advance further, if possible, and will not rest satisfied as soon as salvation has been attained. "He that feareth God," says the Wise Man, "will do good" (Ecclus. xv. 1). But that is not enough. For I find it written elsewhere, "Turn away from evil and do good, seek after peace and pursue it" (Ps. xxxiii. 15). Therefore, let not salvation alone content thee: seek after peace also, unless thou desirest to expose even salvation itself to peril. Hear how exultantly the Angel sings of peace at the birth of Him Who has made Himself "our peace" (Ephes. ii. 14): "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will" (Luke ii. 14). Now, what is a good will but a rightly ordered will? Dost thou desire me to explain what that is? A rightly ordered will is one that is in perfect harmony with reason and which regulates itself by that utterance of enlightened reason, "The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. viii. 18). When thou beginnest to have a vivid realisation of this truth, doubtless thou shalt willingly bear the cross of the Lord and shalt say, "I am ready and am not troubled that I may keep Thy commandments" (Ps. cxviii. 60).

Nevertheless, "if thou wilt be perfect," one thing is yet wanting to thee (Matt. xix. 20, 21). Shall I tell thee what it is? It is "joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xiv. 17). He that is kept in restraint by fear is patient, and he that is guided by hope is benignant: but unless both likewise be fervent in spirit they shall easily fall. But "the charity of God (which) is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost" (Rom. v. 5) is "patient" and "kind" and—what is still better—

" never falleth away " (1 Cor. xiii. 4, 8). Thus, with respect to the primeval command laid upon our first parents, it will appear to you, if you consider the matter attentively, that Eve gave proof of patience whilst Adam showed himself kind ; yet, inasmuch as both of them fell, it is clear that neither of them stood upon a secure footing. " The woman," so we read, " saw that the tree was good to eat, and fair to the eyes, and delightful to behold " (Gen. iii. 6). Does it not seem to you, my brethren, that she can scarcely restrain her hands ? Thus also when she is interrogated by the serpent, you can plainly see from the manner of her reply how heavy upon her will weighed the command of the Lord : " Of the fruit of the trees that are in paradise we do eat," she answers, " but of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of paradise God hath commanded us that we should not eat, and that we should not touch it, lest perhaps we die " (ibid. 2, 3). She does not say simply, " Such is the will of our Creator. Why He has so willed, He best can tell. For us it is sufficient to obey, because our life is in His good will (Ps. xxix. 6)." So the woman was easily induced to believe the serpent s promise and to consent to his suggestion. But " Adam was not seduced " (1 Tim. ii. 14) by the serpent's craft : he was rather subverted by his love for the woman. He would have been glad to keep the commandment for ever, knowing how profitable it was, had not his wife persuaded him to adopt a different course. It even seems that he never experienced any difficulty in observing the divine precept : but although his will was good, it lacked fortitude, because it lacked fervour.

For we must bear in mind, brethren, that it is not patience or hope that is pronounced to be " strong as death," but only charity ; not fear or reason but the

spirit of fortitude. Says patience, urged on by fear, "I am constrained to act in this wise"; says the good will, attracted by the motive of hope, "To act in this wise is expedient and necessary for me"; but charity, inflamed by the Holy Spirit, knows nothing of constraint or expediency; she says, "I will, I desire, I am full of eager longing to act in this wise." You observe how much sublimity, how much security, how much of sweetness there is in charity. Happy the soul that has already arrived at this loving disposition! Yet there is no reason why we should despair, since the principal object which the Church has in view in celebrating to-day the memory of one who attained to that degree is this: that we may implore his aid and be encouraged by his example. I say more: that even amongst ourselves there are some who, as it seems to me, have already mounted to the same height of perfection. If, then, you tell me that St. Andrew was an apostle, and that you, who are so weak, cannot be expected to walk in his footsteps: I answer that it is a shame for you not to follow the good example of those at least with whom you live. No one attains to perfection at a single bound. It is not by rapid flight but by laborious climbing we must reach the topmost rung of the mystical ladder. Let us mount, therefore, with the two feet of meditation and prayer. For meditation will show what is wanting to us and prayer will obtain it. The former will point out the way, the latter will lead us along it. In fine, meditation will discover to our view the dangers which threaten us and prayer will enable us to avoid them, through the mercy of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Ghost one God for ever and ever. Amen.

SECOND SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF ST. ANDREW.

" His truth shall surround thee with a shield ; thou shalt not be afraid of the terror of the night, of the arrow that flieth in the day, of the business that walketh about in the dark, of invasion, or of the noonday devil."—Ps. xc. 5, 6.

To-day, my brethren, we celebrate the feast of the holy Apostle St. Andrew, in whose history, if we examine it with devout attention, we shall find much that is well calculated to edify our souls. In the very beginning of his conversion to God he furnishes us with a noble example of perfect obedience, an example very useful for all Christians, yet deserving to be embraced with particular devotion by us who are bound by our religious profession to the practice of that virtue. Very wise, yea, rather Wisdom Itself is the Banker to Whom we have to pay this coin of obedience. He will refuse to accept it from us unless it is found whole and sterling and free from alloy. For if we discuss what is commanded, if we make distinctions, if we obey one order and disobey another : the coin is broken, it will not be accepted by Christ, to Whom we are bound to render, not a divided, but an unbroken coin ; since we have all promised Him obedience absolutely and without any exception. But if one should obey indeed what is enjoined him, yet with only an external and pretended submission, accompanied with interior murmuring : such a one's coin is counterfeit : it is not silver but lead, and iniquity is seated upon the talent of lead (Zach. v. 7, 8). He who presents it " doth act deceitfully,"

but in the sight of God (Ps. xxxv. 3) Who "is not mocked" (Gal. vi. 7).

Brethren, do you desire that I should exhibit to your view the pattern of perfect obedience? If so, be attentive. "Jesus walking by the sea of Galilee," says the Scripture, "saw Simon, called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea (for they were fishers). And He saith to them: Come ye after Me, and I will make you to be fishers of men" (Matt. iv. 18, 19). That is to say, "I will make you change from one kind of fishing to another, or rather from catchers of fish I will make you preachers of the Gospel." "And they immediately leaving their nets, followed Him" (ibid. 20), "immediately," observe—without discussion or hesitation, without considering how rough and uneducated fishermen could be formed into preachers, without either questioning or delay. Now bear in mind that it is for your instruction these words have been written down (Rom. xv. 4), that it is for your instruction they are recited year after year in the Church: so that knowing the form of perfect obedience, you may "purify your souls in the obedience of charity" (1 Peter i. 22). For it is charity alone that gives its value to the coin of obedience; charity is the "silver" of obedience, "purged and purified" (Ps. xi. 7): that is to say, it is charity and naught beside that renders obedience pleasing and acceptable to God. Hence we are told that "God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. ix. 7), and it is also written, "If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (1 Cor. xiii. 3).

Would you like me, dearest brethren, to say something also concerning the holy Apostle's martyrdom, which we are commemorating to-day, unto the praise and glory of Christ and your edification? You have heard, no doubt, how, when he arrived at the place where the cross was ready for him, the man of God "was strengthened in the Lord" (1 Kings xxx. 6), and by the Spirit, Whom he had received in common with the other apostles in the form of tongues of fire, began to utter words of fire. For when he saw from afar the cruel gibbet awaiting him, he showed none of those signs of fear which seem to be inseparable from the weakness of our mortal nature: his face did not grow pallid, nor did his blood freeze in his veins; there was no stiffening of his hair, no sudden loss of speech, no trembling of the body, no mental agitation, nor any of that derangement of the reason which is usually experienced by men in the like circumstances; instead, "out of the abundance of his heart his mouth spoke" (Matt. xii. 34), and the charity which burned in his breast sent forth through his voice flames and sparks of the most extreme ardour. Listen to his exclamations of delight, when, as I have said, he beheld in the distance the cross prepared for him. "O cross so long desired," he cried, "and now at last ready for the soul that pines for thee! Behold I come to thee with confidence and joy: do thou also embrace me with gladness, as a disciple of Him Who hung upon thee; for I have always been thy lover and have longed for thy embraces." Tell me, I pray you, is this the language of a human being? Is it a mere man that speaks thus, or is it not rather an angel or some new kind of creature? But we know that the speaker is a man, and "a man passible like unto us"

(James v. 17). That he is passible will presently appear plain enough from the passion he is about to endure, the approach of which has thrown him into such an ecstasy of joy. Whence, therefore, this novel exultation in the human heart, and this delight hitherto unheard of? Whence such constancy in a creature naturally so weak? Whence such a spiritual mind in a mere man, such a fervour of charity, such strength of soul? God forbid that we should suppose him to possess of himself so great a degree of virtue! It is undoubtedly a "perfect gift," "coming down," therefore, "from the Father of lights" (James i. 17), from Him, that is, "Who alone doth great wonders" (Ps. cxxxv. 4).

Manifestly, it was the Spirit Who helped his infirmity (Rom. viii. 26), by Whom also was poured forth in his heart that charity (Rom. v. 5) which is "strong as death" (Cant. viii. 6), yea, even stronger than death. Oh, that we were found worthy of a participation of the same Divine Spirit! For you know, most dearly beloved, how painful we find our penitential labours, how bitter our bodily mortifications, how burdensome our fasts. If our "soul slumbereth through heaviness" (Ps. cxviii. 28) at vigils, the only reason is that we have not the Spirit. For were He present with us, doubtless He would "help our infirmity"; and just as He rendered the cross and death itself attractive to the blessed Andrew, so would He not only remove all the bitterness from our labour and penance, but He would cause us to find them sweet and consoling. "My Spirit," saith the Lord, "is sweet above honey" (Ecclus. xxiv. 27), so that not even the bitterness of death, than which nothing else is so bitter, can prevail over His sweetness. What

bitterness, then, shall not that sweetness sweeten, which renders even death so deliciously sweet? What sourness shall have power to resist that unction which gives death itself so delightful a savour? "When He shall give sleep to His beloved," sings the Psalmist, "behold the inheritance of the Lord" (Ps. cxxvi. 3). What sadness shall not that joy expel which makes death itself supremely joyous? Oh, let us seek this Spirit, dearest brethren, let us strive with all diligence and solicitude that we may deserve to have this Spirit, or rather since we have Him already, that we may deserve to have Him "more abundantly" (John x. 10); "for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. viii. 9). "But we have not received the spirit of this world but the Spirit That is of God, that we may know the things that are given us from God" (1 Cor. ii. 12). We have proof of His presence amongst us in the very works of life and salvation which we do, and which we should certainly have no power to accomplish had we not the Spirit of the Saviour nigh to us to vivify our souls. Let us pray, therefore, that God may multiply His gifts in us, and may grant us an increase of His Holy Spirit, of Whom He has already given us the "first fruits" (Rom. viii. 23). For we can possess no stronger evidence of the Spirit's indwelling in our souls than this very desire to advance in His grace. Hence He says Himself, "They that eat Me shall yet hunger, and they that drink Me shall yet thirst" (Ecclus. xxiv. 29).

But possibly there are many here who in the bottom of their hearts are now replying to me thus: "We do indeed desire to have this Spirit that He may 'help our infirmity,' but we are unable to find Him." To

which I answer: If you fail to find Him, the reason is because you do not seek Him; and if you do not receive Him, it is because you do not ask for Him. But if you do ask, yet still without obtaining, that is because you do not ask with sufficient earnestness. For before giving us the Holy Ghost God awaits nothing more, demands nothing more, than that we should ask Him with constancy and fervent desire. When, think you, shall He refuse His Spirit to those that solicit Him, since even before we pray, He invites and exhorts us to solicit Him? And hear what Christ says in the Gospel: "If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children: how much more will your Father from heaven give the good Spirit to them that ask Him?" (Luke xi. 13). Consequently, most dearly beloved, let us ask without intermission, let us ask without hesitation, and in all our actions let us constantly invoke the presence and assistance of this most sweet and desirable Spirit. For we also, my brethren, must take up our cross like the blessed Andrew, or rather like Him Whom Andrew imitated, Our Lord and Saviour. And this was the cause of the holy Martyr's exceeding joy and exultation, the fact, namely, that he seemed to be dying not only for his beloved Master, but also with Him, "having been planted together with Him in the likeness of His death" (Rom. vi. 5); so that having suffered with Him he should also reign with Him (2 Tim. ii. 12). As for us, that we too may have the courage to crucify ourselves with Christ, let us listen attentively with the ears of our heart to His voice proclaiming in the Gospel, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me"

(Luke ix. 23). As if He should say, "He who desires to possess Me must despise himself, and whoso wishes to do My will must renounce his own."

But immediately war is declared, and at once the enemies of our souls take up arms against us. Let us arm also. But let our arms resemble those of our King. Let us, like Him, take up our cross, through which we shall triumph over all our enemies. For hear what the Psalmist has promised, or rather the Holy Ghost by the mouth of the Psalmist: "His truth shall surround thee with a shield" (Ps. xc. 5), that is, the truth of the Most High, of whom David is here speaking, as is clear from the context. Now, my brethren, why should we be *surrounded* with the shield of truth unless it be that we are likewise surrounded by enemies? But attend to the Psalmist, who explains why the Most High surrounds thee with His shield: "His truth shall surround thee with a shield," he says, To what purpose, O holy Prophet? "Thou shalt not be afraid of the terror of the night, of the arrow that flieth in the day, of the business that walketh about in the dark, of invasion, or of the noonday devil" (ibid. 5, 6). Seest thou now what great need thou hast to be surrounded with the shield of truth, since on every side thou art exposed to the darts of thine enemies? From below thou art assailed by "the terror of the night"; on thy left hand by "the arrow that flieth in the day"; on thy right by "the business that walketh about in the dark"; and to leave no quarter free from danger, thou art threatened from above by "the noonday devil." But, miserable and wretched as we are! although abiding in the vicinity of so many serpents, although "the fiery darts of the

most wicked one" (Ephes. vi. 16) are shooting all round us, although enemies assail us from every side: nevertheless, we slumber in perilous security and indifference, we are tepid and slothful, we amuse ourselves with vanity and buffoonery, and show as little zeal for spiritual exercises as if we had already found peace and safety and as if it were not true that "the life of man upon earth is a warfare" (Job vii. 1)! I assure you, most dearly beloved, this is a reflection which terrifies me exceedingly and pierces my very heart with the sword of most poignant fear: that living in the midst of the gravest perils, we do not appear to have at all as much watchfulness, zeal, or solicitude as such a situation requires. For this negligence on our part proves one or other of two things: either that we have already surrendered to the enemy without our knowing it, or else—if we are still holding out—that we show ourselves extremely ungrateful to Him Who has protected us. Now it is manifest enough that each of these alternatives is full of danger. Therefore, dearest brethren, let us, I entreat you, let us be aroused to greater vigilance even by the thought of the devil's sleepless malice. Let our enemy's malevolent zeal, wherewith he labours tirelessly and watchfully to compass our destruction, make us also solicitous and circumspect, so that "with fear and trembling we may work out our salvation" (Phil. ii. 12).

Brethren, it is in the cross we shall find our salvation, yet so if we cleave to it firmly with manly courage. "For the word of the cross," as the Apostle speaks, "to them indeed that perish is foolishness; but to them that are saved, that is, to us, it is the power of God" (1 Cor. i. 18). The cross is that shield wherewith we

are surrounded, and its four arms protect us from the four darts of the enemy. The stem or lower arm is our defence against "the terror of the night," that is to say, against pusillanimity which arises from the fear of bodily mortification, for it gives us courage to "chastise the body" which is beneath us, and to "bring it into subjection" (1 Cor. ix. 27). But if anyone insults us to our face, if anyone endeavours openly to entice us to evil: there you have "the arrow that flieth in the day"; it comes from the left side and shall be received in the left arm of the cross. On the other hand, whenever anyone flatters me, or with the pretence of giving counsel, offers me the deadly poison of detraction, or attempts to sow in my heart the seeds of hatred and discord, or seeks to persuade me to any kind of evil under the appearance of good: "he is at my right hand" (Ps. xv. 8) indeed, yet he is a Judas, he betrays me with a kiss, and with the right arm of the cross must be repelled this "business that walketh about in the dark." But now behold "the noonday devil," I mean the spirit of pride, who is accustomed to attack virtue with the greater fury in proportion as it is the more exalted. I have often been at pains to admonish you, dearest brethren, as to the pernicious character of this vice. "For pride is the beginning of all sin" (Ecclus. x. 15), and "from it all perdition took its origin" (Job iv. 14). Consequently, whosoever thou art that art zealous to work out thy salvation, be sure to have the upper arm of the cross above thy head as a defence against this enemy, that thou mayest not be lifted up in pride, that "thy heart may not be exalted," that thou mayest not "walk in great matters nor in wonderful things

above thee" (Ps. cxxx. 1), and that the head of the cross surmounting thine own head may intercept all the darts which come from above. Remember that it is this upper arm alone which bears the title both of salvation * and of the kingdom. For none but he that humbles himself shall deserve to be saved and exalted.

Now to recapitulate: the four arms of the cross are the four virtues of continence, patience, prudence, and humility. Happy the man that glories in this cross, that triumphs in this cross! Only let him persevere upon it, and by no power of temptation can he be overcome. Therefore let him that is thus crucified beseech his Lord and Master, like the blessed Andrew, not to suffer him to be taken down from his cross. For is there any excess of audacity to which the wicked one may not proceed, any evil too daring for his impious presumption to attempt? That which he purposed to accomplish against the disciple by the hands of Aegeas, he had before designed to do against the Master by the tongues of the Jews: but in both instances he repented too late of his action and was obliged to withdraw, beaten and confounded. God grant he may retire from us also, vanquished by the Same Who triumphed over his malice both in His own Person and in the person of His disciple! And through His gracious mercy may we likewise deserve to be happily consummated on the cross of our penance—such as it is—which we are bearing for His own sake, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

* "And they put over His Head His cause written: This is Jesus (Saviour) the King of the Jews."—Matt. xxvii. 37.

SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF THE BLESSED HUMBERT.*

December 7th.

"Having food and wherewith to be covered, with these he was content."—1 Tim. vi. 8.

My brethren, Humbert, the servant of the Lord, is dead: he is dead, the Lord's devoted and faithful servant. You saw yourselves how he expired in my arms last night, like "a tender little worm of the wood" (2 Kings xxiii. 8). For three days he struggled with death, which held him, so to speak, between its jaws to gorge itself with the blood for which it thirsted. Well, it has done its worst against him. It has killed his body which now lies buried "in the heart of the earth" (Matt. xii. 40). It has deprived me of a dear friend, a prudent counsellor, a strong supporter. The insatiable homicide has spared neither me nor you, but me less than you. "Doth bitter death separate in this manner?" (1 Kings xv. 32). O most cruel beast! O "bitterness most bitter" (Is. xxxviii. 17)! O thou source of terror and horror to the children of Adam!

* This holy religious had left the Benedictines to become a disciple of St. Bernard, and was sent by him about the year 1120 to found the monastery of Igny, in the diocese of Rheims, which he governed as Abbot for eighteen years. He then resigned the abbatial office in spite of the opposition of his master, who addressed to him a letter (Ep. 141) full of very severe strictures. However, he came back to Clairvaux in 1138, and lived there as a private religious until his happy death on December 7th, 1148.—(Translator.)

Tell me, what hast thou done? "Thou hast slain, moreover also thou hast taken possession" (3 Kings xxi. 19). Yes, but what hast thou slain? Only the body: for thou hadst no power to hurt the soul. She has taken flight to her Creator, to the Same Whom she sighed for so ardently and sought after so courageously all the days of her earthly existence. What is more: even the very body which thou seemest to possess shall be taken from thee, when thou, "the enemy death, shalt be destroyed last of all" (1 Cor. xv. 26) and "swallowed up in victory" (ibid. 54). Yes, the time will come when thou shalt restore that body, which yesterday thou didst cover with clamm, perspiration and all the other horrid heralds of thy advent, rejoicing and exulting because thou hadst caught another poor mortal in the meshes of thy net. The Only-Begotten of the Father will come "with great power and majesty" (Luke xxi. 27) to seek Humbert and to render that now lifeless body "like to the Body of His glory" (Phil. iii. 21). And what shall be thy fate? Doubtless that which is written in the Prophet Jeremias: "In thy latter end thou shalt be a fool" (Jer. xvii. 11); whilst Humbert shall live for evermore thou shalt die eternally. As the whale vomited forth the Prophet whom it had swallowed down (Jonah ii. 11) so shalt thou give up Humbert who is now engulfed in thy voracious maw.

For the rest, my brethren, this servant of God, by the example he gave, preached to you a very long and a very sublime sermon on all that relates to sanctity. It was as long as his years were many, and as sublime as his life was holy. There is no need that I should address you any more, if you remember well that sermon of

Humbert's and have impressed deeply on your hearts the lessons which he taught. Fifty years and more he spent in the service of that Master Whom to serve is to reign, having been placed whilst yet but a boy in the sanctuary of the Lord. With us he has lived thirty years, that is, from the very foundation of this monastery, not only "without blame" (Luke i. 6) but with profit and edification to all. Therefore shall "his memory be in benediction" (Ecclus. xlv. 1) to future generations as well as to this present. As a "stranger and sojourner" (Gen. xxiii. 4), he has passed along the road of life, using as little as possible of the things of earth, for he knew that he was not of this world (John xv. 19). He knew that he "had not here a lasting city" (Heb. xiii. 14) as neither had his fathers, but "stretching himself forth to the things that are before" (Phil. iii. 13), he "pressed towards the mark, to the prize of the supernal vocation" (ibid. 14). There was nothing in him or about him to which the world could justly lay claim: for he did not please the world nor did the world please him. He took of its substance no more than necessity required, and he would have carried his abstinence further still had he not been restrained by obedience. "Having food and wherewith to be covered, with these he was content" (1 Tim. vi. 8), and he wanted only a bare sufficiency of these, excluding all superfluities. Yea, he used often to complain of that as superfluous which in truth did not exceed the limits of strict necessity. And a few days ago, as I well remember, whilst we were conversing together, he remarked that he was but a pensioner of this monastery, a good-for-nothing, who eat his bread idle in the house of God. Yes, he was truly "meek and

humble of heart" (Matt. xi. 29); and whereas his soul was adorned with every kind of virtue, the grace of sweetness wherewith he was endowed seemed to be his chief characteristic. Thus to all he appeared very amiable and affable, for such he was in truth.

But amongst his other virtuous qualities must be mentioned the vigilance with which he guarded his lips and his tongue, as you, my brethren, can all render testimony, who for so many years have witnessed his life and listened to his conversation. Who has ever heard from his mouth the language of detraction, the language of buffoonery, the language of boasting, the language of envy? Who has ever heard him finding fault with his neighbour or approving of the fault-finder? Who has ever heard him uttering idle words? Nay, who would not have feared to utter such words in his presence? For with all solicitude he "took heed to his ways that he might not sin with his tongue" (Ps. xxxviii. 2), knowing that "if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man" (James iii. 2). Little cause hadst thou, O Humbert, to fear that evangelical thunderclap: "Woe to you that now laugh, for you shall mourn and weep" (Luke vi. 25). Did any of you ever see him laugh even when all were laughing around him? He would indeed assume a smiling countenance on such occasions for the sake of his companions, lest otherwise he should appear burdensome to them, but I do not think you can recollect ever to have seen him indulge in real laughter. What fervour he brought day and night to the work of God, even down to the very day of his death, you all have witnessed, yea, and wondered at. He had come to the decrepitude of years, and besides the infirmities inci-

dental to old age, was afflicted and harassed with several other serious maladies unsuspected by most of you: but his spirit, as the saying has it, triumphed over his years, and knew not how to bend to the weakness of his body. For weak as he was, he used to labour like a young man, in cold and in heat, scaling the mountains and descending to the valleys, in a way that excited the wonder and admiration of all. Whenever the pressure of the multitudinous affairs claiming my attention obliged me to keep him near, in order to have the benefit of his counsel, how sad and sombre he would appear until allowed to rejoin you at your manual labour! Very rarely was he missed from his place in choir at the hour appointed for vigils which indeed he not seldom anticipated, and more rarely still did he absent himself from the other canonical hours. But whenever he did stay away it was to avoid aggravating a distemper which otherwise would soon "have the answer of death" (2 Cor. i. 9).

Moreover, in the refectory he would hardly partake of the common food, and if ever anything special were offered him he would either refuse it altogether or would accept it only with the greatest reluctance, so that he often made such indulgence a matter for complaint against the whole community. He had formed the resolution never to drink anything but water, and he would have carried out his purpose had not I opposed it with all the force of my authority. If he were obliged occasionally to use a little wine, he would mingle so much water with it that nothing of the wine remained but the colour. Nothing save obedience—and hardly even that—could ever make him consent to enter the infirmary, and when at last we had got him there,

we found it just as difficult to induce him to stay. I acknowledge that his obedience was defective in this matter, inasmuch as he overwhelmed me in a manner with the weight of his authority. I praise him in other respects, but " in this I praise him not " (1 Cor. xi. 22) for, as you are aware, he remained to the end very stubbornly attached to his austerities. For myself, I believe that if he had any remorse of conscience at the last it was on account of this unwillingness to be guided by me in what concerned the necessities of his body. But what an invaluable counsellor he was! Certainly, he knew how to be candid and discreet, as I myself can testify perhaps better than any other, forasmuch as I had more frequent occasion to knock at the door of his heart: yet not I alone, but every one of you can witness to the same fact. For who ever approached him, afflicted with temptations, no matter how violent or multitudinous, that did not learn from his lips what the whole root of his trouble was and what the remedy to be applied? He would so penetrate all the folds of his spiritual patient's conscience as to make it appear to the latter that he must have been present and noted all the circumstances when the incident in question occurred.

But what shall I say of his charity? He had so " put on the bowels of mercy " (Col. iii. 12) that he was ready to excuse all, to intercede for all, without even the knowledge of the persons for whom he spoke. He was not " a respecter of persons " (Acts x. 34): he looked solely to their necessities. He was, then, humble of heart, gentle in speech, assiduous in labour, fervent in charity, faithful in guarding whatever he was charged with, prudent and circumspect in counsel. I

do not know any man of the present generation whom he did not surpass in the virtue of imperturbable equanimity : he was just the same at all seasons and at every hour of the day. It was evident that he walked in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus ; nor did he halt in the way until he had completed his course. As the Master was poor, so too was the disciple ; as the Master lived a life of labour, so too did the disciple ; as Christ was crucified, so too was Humbert fastened to many great crosses, and he " bore the marks of the Lord Jesus in his body " (Gal. vi. 17), " filling up those things that were wanting of the sufferings of Christ even in his flesh " (Col. ii. 24) ; as the Master arose from the dead, so too shall the disciple arise ; as the Master ascended into heaven, so too (as we believe) shall the disciple ascend. Yes, my brethren, Humbert shall ascend when, for our sakes, the King of glory will come down again, just as He mounted up before, " in order to make known His might to the sons of men " (Ps. cxliv. 12) : for it is not less glorious to come down through the air than to mount up through the air. Thus the angels long ago predicted to the disciples that " this Jesus Who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as you have seen Him going into heaven " (Acts i. 11). " Praise not any man before death," says the Scripture (Ecclus. xi. 30), because there is always some danger in eulogising the living. This counsel of the Holy Ghost I have faithfully followed with regard to Humbert ; for so long as he lived I never once opened my lips to commend him for his virtues, lest perhaps either I should incur the suspicion of flattery, or he should be exposed to the temptation of vainglory. But now there is no longer any occasion to fear either

of these evils, because I do not see him, and he, as I suppose, does not hear me. Yet even should it be the fact that he does hear my voice, he is now too securely and too blissfully united to the Word of God to be affected by any words of man. For "the enemy shall have no advantage over him, nor (the suggestor of vanity) have power to hurt him" (Ps. lxxxviii. 23).

O my most loving father, thou hast at last attained to that fountain of purity for which thou didst long during life with all the ardour of thy soul. Thou art now immersed in that abyss of divine charity, "the memory of the abundance of the sweetness" whereof thou wast wont to "publish" with such devotion (Ps. cxliv. 7). Who indeed could preach as fervently as thou on God's loving-kindness? or who could exhort men so earnestly to the practice of purity? Or who had such an ardent love for both the one and the other? Or who ever heard a single sentence from thy lips that contained no commendation of purity, no praise of the goodness of God? It is not for thee, therefore, that I grieve, since the Lord hath given thee the desire of thy heart (Ps. xx. 3). I only lament the loss to myself of a faithful counsellor, an invaluable assistant, "a man of one mind" (Ps. liv. 14), a man according to my own heart. Yes, it is upon me alone all the bitterness of this trial has fallen. "Upon me hath come Thine anger," O Lord Jesus, "and Thy terrors have troubled me" (Ps. lxxxvii. 17). "Friend and neighbour Thou hast put far from me, and my acquaintance because of my misery" (ibid. 19). Thou hast drawn them forth from their misery, leaving me alone in mine. Thou hast taken from my side those who were related to me according to the flesh and

related to me more closely in the spirit, men endowed with heavenly wisdom for the conduct as well of temporal as of spiritual affairs. Thou hast summoned hence, one after another, those who helped me to bear the burden, the crushing burden which Thou hast laid upon my shoulders. Out of so many that were near and dear to me, Humbert alone, or almost alone, was left, and his friendship was all the more sweet to me for that it was so old: now Thou hast taken him also from me, yet without injustice, because he was Thine. I, I alone am reserved for the lash; I have to die in each of my dear ones, " and all Thy waves Thou hast brought in upon me " (Ps. lxxxvii. 8). Would to God Thou wert willing to slay once and for all him whom Thou scourgest, instead of keeping me thus alone, miserable man that I am, in order to make me endure repeated deaths, many and cruel! Nevertheless, " I do not contradict the words of the Holy One " (Job vi. 10); rather do I say with Job, " May He That hath begun destroy me " and " may this be my only consolation that afflicting me with sorrow He spare not " (ibid. 9, 10). " For I am ready for scourges " (Ps. xxxvii. 18), provided my Heavenly Father in His loving-kindness will transform my sufferings into merits. Hence, though my words are full of sorrow, they express no discontent. I do not weep for Humbert (for surely his lot is not lamentable, who has been invited to the table of a most wealthy Prince), but I weep for myself and for my children, I weep for this house, I weep for all our other brethren, who all looked for counsel from Humbert's lips. We read that when our Saviour (whilst carrying His cross as a robber would carry his halter) saw the women who had followed Him

from Galilee bewailing his fate, He turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children" (Luke xxiii. 28), "for the things concerning Me have an end" (Luke xxii. 37). That is, "The torments which you see prepared for Me are temporal, but the joys to which they lead, and which you do not see, are eternal" (2 Cor. iv. 18). Now, what is temporal is transitory, and what is transitory is mortal: therefore, since "the things that are seen are temporal" (ibid.), this alone suffices to prove anything mortal or transitory, the fact, namely, that it can be seen. So, my brethren, temporal likewise were the sufferings which we saw Humbert enduring at his death, whereas the joy and the gladness to which he has now attained will last for ever and ever.

Consequently, we must not weep over him for whom neither "mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more" (Apoc. xxi. 4). Neither ought we to murmur at our own lot, because he has been taken from us. Rather we should return thanks to the Lord for having left him with us so long. I think I can truly say that for the last ten years he lived only to us and for us; and I am much afraid that the reason why he has been taken from us is this: that we were not worthy to associate with him any longer. It may be, nevertheless—who knows?—that therefore has he been summoned hence, in order to protect us by his prayers in the presence of the Father. God grant it may be so! For if his charity was so great whilst he lived here amongst us that he always took more pleasure in ministering to the bodily necessities of others than to his own: how much greater must be

the love and kindness he feels for us now that he is intimately united to the Supreme Love Which is God? But perhaps it will be suggested that he possesses now a fuller knowledge of my dispositions and conduct, and consequently does not compassionate me as heretofore, but, there is too much reason to fear, regards me with indignation? Yet even though it be true that God has withdrawn him from us because of our sins, I ask of him to obtain for us by his intercession a merciful remission of the chastisement in store, so that we may not have to endure penalty upon penalty.

For the rest, dearest brethren, I assure you, if you walk in Humbert's footsteps, you will not often sin by vain thoughts or by idle words, or by jesting and buffoonery, in which many religious waste no inconsiderable part of their life and of their time. The moments slip by, never to return; and whilst you flatter yourselves that you have escaped the trivial penalties prescribed for your faults in this life, you are treasuring up a much more severe punishment in the life to come. Be certain of this, that the debts which you neglect to cancel whilst you live in the body shall be exacted of you a hundredfold, and down to the "last farthing" (Matt. v. 26), in the place of purgation. I know how hard it is for a dissipated monk to "embrace discipline" (Ps. ii. 12), for a loquacious monk to bridle his tongue, for a restless monk, fond of gadding abroad, to abide for long in one place; but it will be harder and very much harder to endure the future pains of purgatory. The man whose body we have just interred here was much tempted in these ways at the beginning of his spiritual life, as I can bear witness; but he resisted with all his

power and emerged victorious from the conflict. And if he found it difficult at first to bear up against the assaults of temptation, he would have found it still more difficult afterwards to endure even the thought of such frivolities, because the good habit had become in him a second nature. Therefore, make this a practical lesson for yourselves; keep before your minds as a pattern of perfection all the good that you have learned of him by sight and hearing, so that, like him, you may one day reach the presence of Jesus Christ our Lord, Who is God blessed for ever. Amen.

FIRST SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL.

January 24th.

"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"—Acts ix. 6.

To-day, most dearly beloved, as is only right, all nations celebrate with joyous festivities the conversion of him who is called the Doctor of Nations. Oh, how many branches do we see put forth from this root! Paul, after his conversion was made the means of converting the whole world. Long ago whilst he was still in the flesh, although "walking not according to the flesh" (Rom. viii. 1), he brought multitudes to God by the ministry of his preaching, and now also, when he lives more happily in God and with God he ceases not from the work of converting souls: I mean by the example he has left us, by his intercession, and by his doctrine. Indeed the very reason why we commemorate his conversion annually with a solemn feast is that it profits us to be reminded of that event. For the thought of that miracle of grace provokes the sinner to penance by inspiring him with the hope of pardon, and to him who is already penitent it exhibits the model of a perfect conversion. Who can any longer despair of the forgiveness of any crime, be it never so heinous, when he hears how "Saul as yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts ix. 1), was suddenly transformed into "a vessel of election" (ibid. 15)? Who can say after

this, no matter what the weight of the wickedness that crushes him, "I have lost the very power of rising to a better life"—who, I ask, can speak thus when he recalls how the most cruel of persecutors was changed in a moment into a most faithful preacher of the Gospel, and that whilst on a journey undertaken to satisfy his thirst for Christian blood, and whilst he was actually venting the deadly hatred of the Christian name wherewith his heart was filled? Do you not see how admirably the conversion of St. Paul commends to us, at one and the same time, the greatness of God's mercy and the power of His grace?

"Suddenly," says St. Luke, "a light from heaven shined round about him" (ibid. 3). O truly inestimable condescension of the divine loving-kindness! A lightning flame is flashed from heaven to illumine at least the exterior of him who is as yet incapable of interior illumination: the light which cannot as yet be poured into him is at least poured around him. "And falling on the ground, he heard a voice" (ibid. 4). The united testimonies of the light and voice are "exceedingly credible" (Ps. xcii. 5), and it is impossible to doubt the truth when it enters the mind by the two windows of sight and hearing. Thus also at an earlier time, when the Lord had been baptised in the Jordan, the Dove was seen descending upon His Head and a voice was heard sounding from the sky (Matt. iii. 16, 17). Thus again, on the holy mount, where He was transfigured before His disciples, His glory was made manifest to their eyes whilst the voice of the Father sounded in their ears (Matt. xvii. 25). "Saul, Saul why persecutest thou Me?" (Acts ix. 4). Saul, clearly, has been caught red-handed. There is no room for dis-

simulation, no opportunity for denial. In his pocket are letters from the high-priest giving him a most cruel commission, a most hateful authority, a most impious power. "Why persecutest thou Me?" asked the Lord. For was not he a persecutor of Christ who was murdering the members of Christ upon earth? If they can be said to have persecuted Christ who nailed to the cross His most blessed Body, why should not he also be called a persecutor of Christ who raged with impious fury against His other "body which is the Church" (Col. i. 24)? For the Church is the mystical body of Christ. Indeed, since the Lord gave His own Blood as the price of our souls' redemption, does it not seem to you that He suffers a greater persecution from the man who by evil suggestion, or by scandal, or by bad example, attempts to wrest from Him the souls He has ransomed, than from the Jew by whom that Blood was shed?

Acknowledge the truth of this, most dearly beloved, and therefore shun with horror the society of them that place obstacles to the salvation of souls—a most dreadful sacrilege, surely, which seems to surpass in malice even the crime of those who laid sacrilegious hands upon the Lord of Majesty Himself. The days of persecution appear to have gone by, but, as has now become evident, persecutions are never wanting to the Christian, nor, by consequence, to Christ. And what makes the persecutions of our times particularly malicious is the circumstance that the men who now persecute Christ call themselves after Him by the name of Christians. O God, Thy friends and Thy neighbours have drawn near and stood against Thee (Ps. xxxvii. 12). The whole Christian people, from the

highest to the lowest, seem to have entered into a conspiracy against Thee. "From the sole of the foot unto the top of the head there is no soundness therein" (Is. i. 6). "Iniquity hath come forth from the ancient judges that seemed to govern the people" (Dan. xiii. 5), that is, from Thine own vicars, O Lord. It is no longer true to say: as the people, so the priest; because nowadays the clergy do not possess even the virtues of the people. "Alas, alas, alas, O Lord God!" (Jer. iv. 10), the leaders in this persecution of Thee are they that appear to love the first places in Thy Church (Matt. xxiii. 6) and to hold therein the highest rank. They have gained possession of the citadel of Sion, they have seized all the ramparts, and they now occupy themselves freely and as men invested with full authority to do what they like, with the work of giving the whole city to the flames. The miserable example of their lives is bringing miserable ruin upon Thy people. And would to God their mischief-making stopped at that! For then, perhaps, there might be someone who, forewarned and protected by the Lord's admonition, would be careful to fulfil what they enjoin without following their evil example, according to that which is written, "Whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do, but according to their works do ye not" (Matt. xxiii. 3). But things have now come to such a pass that our prelates traffic in sacred orders "as supposing gain to be godliness" (1 Tim. vi. 5). The men of the present time are found to be full of godliness in undertaking, or rather in accepting, the care of souls; but that becomes the least of their cares once they have obtained the office, and the least of their solicitudes concerns the salvation of

their flocks. Now, could there be any persecution of the Saviour of souls more cruel than this? It is true, the rest also "act wickedly" against Christ (Joel iii. 19), and "even now there are become many antichrists" (1 John ii. 18). But the persecution which He suffers at the hands of His own ministers He considers, not without good cause, to be the most cruel, on account of the benefits He has conferred upon His oppressors, and also the most formidable by reason of their authority: although, as I have said, there are others also who seem to labour hard "by sundry means and divers manners" (Heb. i. 1) and on every occasion to impede the salvation of souls. Christ Himself beholds all this and is silent; the Saviour suffers all this, and dissembles His grief. Therefore it is necessary for us likewise to dissemble and to keep silence for the present, particularly with regard to our prelates, the rulers of the Church. And I think they themselves will be better pleased with this, so that they may now escape the judgment of men, even though hereafter "a most severe judgment shall be for them that bear rule" and "the mighty shall be mightily tormented" (Wisdom vi. 6, 7).

But, dearest brethren, I am not without fear lest perhaps even amongst ourselves should be found those who persecute the Lord, since it is obvious to reason that he is a persecutor of the Saviour of souls whosoever places obstacles to the salvation of souls. What thanks can I return for my soul's salvation to that brother who gives me to drink of the poison of detraction? Justly are detractors described as "hateful to God" (Rom. i. 30), since they so persecute Him. And what shall I say of him who by his example leads others to

a more lax observance of rule ? or of him who troubles the community by his singularity, disquiets it by his curiosity, annoys it by his impatience and murmuring, or in any way " grieves the Holy Spirit of God " (Ephes. iv. 30) dwelling in his brethren, by " scandalising one of these little ones that believe in Him " (Matt. xviii. 6) ? Is it not evident that such religious are persecutors of Christ ? In order, therefore, that we may keep ever far removed from us both the name and the guilt of these persecutors, let us show ourselves, I entreat you, most dearly beloved, always kind and gentle, " with patience supporting one another " (Ephes. iv. 2), and exciting one another to that which is better and more perfect. For where is the servant who supposes he accomplishes all that is required of him by abstaining from persecuting his master, without rendering him any positive service ? What merit shall he have by merely not opposing, if he does not also assist him ? If, nevertheless, there should be found anyone so pusillanimous as to think it enough to be neither a persecutor nor a " coadjutor of God " (1 Cor. iii. 9), let him hear what God Himself has said : " He that is not with Me is against Me ; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth " (Matt. xii. 30).

" Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me ? Who said : Who art Thou, Lord " ? (Acts ix. 4, 5). By these words of Saul we are plainly given to understand that so far the " light which shone around him " had not penetrated to his heart. He heard the sound of the Lord's voice, but the face of the Lord he could not see : because he was being now instructed in the faith, and as he taught his own disciples later on, " Faith cometh by hearing " (Rom. x. 17). " Who art Thou, Lord ? " said he. For

he did not know Who it was he was persecuting, and for that reason he "obtained the mercy of God, because he did it ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Tim. i. 13). Understand from this, brethren, that "the Lord, the just Judge" (2 Tim. iv. 8) looks not so much to what we do as to the intention with which it is done; and beware henceforth of esteeming as a matter of small moment any offence, be it never so slight in itself, which you are conscious of having committed with full deliberation. Let no one say in his heart, "These are but little faults, therefore I will not trouble to correct them. There is no great danger in persevering in such venial and inconsiderable sins." Dearest brethren, to be thus minded is the sin of impenitence, to speak like that is blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, the irremissible blasphemy (Matt. xii. 31).* Paul was a blasphemer undoubtedly, yet he blasphemed not against the Holy Ghost, because he "did it ignorantly in unbelief." And therefore it was that he "obtained the mercy of God," because he did not blaspheme against the Spirit of God.

"Who art Thou, Lord? And He said: I am Jesus of Nazareth † Whom thou persecutest" (Acts ix. 5). As if He should say: I am thy Saviour Whom thou art persecuting to thine own destruction; I am He of Whom was predicted what thou hast read in thy law,

* That is to say, by such a resolution to go on sinning against the light we deserve that God should abandon us to our weakness, so that we soon overstep the limits of venial sin and are well on the road to final impenitence—the only irremissible sin, as St. Bernard elsewhere teaches. All spiritual writers warn us of the special danger there is in deliberate attachment to venial faults, no matter how light in themselves or when committed through frailty.—(Translator.)

† "Nazarenus," found neither in the Vulgate nor in the Greek.—(Translator.)

yet knowest not that it hath been already accomplished: "He shall be called a Nazarite" (Matt. ii. 23). "And he trembling and astonished, said: Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts ix. 6). Here, my brethren, you have assuredly the pattern of a perfect conversion of life. The recent persecutor seems to say with the Psalmist, "My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready" (Ps. cvii. 2); also, "I am ready, and am not troubled, that I may keep Thy commandments" (Ps. cxviii. 60). "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" "A short word" (Rom. ix. 28) indeed, but oh, how full of meaning! how "living and effectual" (Heb. iv. 12)! how "worthy of all acceptation" (1 Tim. i. 15)! And how few are to be found possessed of such perfect obedience, who have so renounced their own wills that they seem to have no longer even hearts of their own, and are for ever seeking, not what pleases themselves, but what is pleasing to the Lord, saying without intermission, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" or that of Samuel, "speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth" (1 Kings iii. 10)! Alas for us! We cannot find amongst us as many imitators of the newly-made Apostle as we do of that blind man mentioned in the Gospel to whom the Lord said, "What wilt thou that I do to thee?" (Luke xviii. 41). Oh, how great is Thy compassion, O Lord, how great Thy condescension! Is it, then, a fact that the Lord inquires what is the will of His servant in order to accomplish it? Oh, blind in truth was that man, because he did not consider, because he did not tremble with holy fear, because he did not exclaim, "Far be such presumption from me, O Lord! Do Thou rather tell Thy servant what it is Thou wouldst have him to do, for it is more becoming and

more proper that Thy will should be sought and accomplished by me than mine by Thee." You perceive, my brethren, that in the case of this soul there was real need of conversion. It is thus that even in our own times, it is thus, I say, that even nowadays, the pusillanimity and perversity of many a religious make it necessary for the superior to inquire of him, "What wilt thou that I do to thee?": whereas it is the subject's duty to say to him who presides, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Yes, the ministers and vicegerents of Christ must now consider what their subjects wish them to command, instead of having their own wishes inquired by the latter. The obedience of such religious is far from perfect; they are not prepared to obey in all things; they have not made up their minds to imitate in everything Him Who came not to do His own will but the will of His Father (John vi. 38); they distinguish and discriminate choosing for themselves in what they will obey the superior, or, to be more exact, choosing in what the superior must render obedience to their own wills. And although such religious may find superiors willing to bear with them, willing to condescend to their weakness and to indulge their humours: I must earnestly entreat them to rise to worthier dispositions and to feel ashamed to be always found "little ones in Christ" (1 Cor. iii. 1), lest they should sometime hear addressed to them the words of reproach, "What is there that I ought to do more to you that I have not done?" (Is. v. 4); and lest, having abused the superior's patience and charity, they should finally incur a just condemnation, all the more terrible on account of the many mercies shown them.

" Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? And the Lord said to him: Arise and go into the city, and there it shall be told thee what thou must do " (Acts ix. 6, 7). O Wisdom of God, truly Thou dost " order all things sweetly " (Wisdom viii. 1)! The man to whom Thou speakest Thou dost send to another man for instructions concerning Thy will, in order to commend to us the advantages of community life, and that Paul, thus instructed by a fellow-man, might learn in his turn to assist other men " according to the grace given him " (Rom. xii. 6). " Go into the city." You see from these words, my brethren, that it was not without a special ordinance of divine wisdom that you came into this city of the " Lord of virtues " (Ps. xxiii. 10) in order to learn the will of God. For plainly He Who first filled your hearts with wholesome terror, and so changed them that they began to desire the knowledge of His will, said then to you, " Arise and go into the city." But hear how expressly simplicity of will and Christian meekness are commended to us in what follows: " And when his eyes were opened he saw nothing. But they (who accompanied him) leading him by the hands, brought him to Damascus " (Acts ix.8). O blessed blindness, wherewith those eyes, heretofore sadly keen-sighted in persecution, are now at last happily clouded by the grace of conversion! And the fact that Paul continued for three days in prayer, neither eating nor drinking (ibid. 9), contains a lesson for those particularly who have but lately renounced the world, and have not yet begun to enjoy divine consolations. Therefore, let them likewise wait for the Lord with all patience, let them pray without intermission, seeking, asking, knocking (Matt.vii.7): for

their heavenly Father will hear them " at a seasonable time " (Ps. xxxi. 6). He will not " forget them unto the end " (Ps. xii. 1), " He will come and will not delay " (Heb. x. 37). And if they continue waiting for Him until the third day, " having nothing to eat," they can be sure " the compassionate and merciful Lord " (Ps. cii. 8) will not " send them away fasting " (Mark viii. 2, 3).

We are then told how Ananias was bidden to impose hands on Saul, and how, as being well instructed in spiritual things, he did not at once obey. Take notice that Paul himself afterwards counselled his own disciple to act in the same way, where he says, writing to Timothy, " Impose not hands lightly upon any man " (1 Tim. v. 22). " And he saw a man named Ananias," said the Lord,* " coming in and putting his hands upon him that he might receive his sight " (Acts ix. 12). I wish to observe hereupon, my brethren, that Paul's sight was not restored to him at the time he was favoured with this vision. Did the fact that he foresaw, perhaps in a dream, Ananias coming in to him dispense him from the necessity of awaiting the imposition of his hands? Most dearly beloved, let me tell you this : that I fear there are some amongst us who consider themselves to have been already spiritually enlightened (although they have been so only in their dreams) and hence no longer suffer themselves in patience to be led by the hand, but rather set themselves up as the guides of others. For why should they have such presumption before they have been charged with the office of governing souls, before " the

* These words are more commonly regarded as a parenthesis and attributed to St. Luke. Cf. a Lapide, *in loco*.—(Translator.)

dispensation of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. iv. 1) has been entrusted to them, before they have been ordered to receive their sight (Acts ix. 17) and to consult for those whose eyes, although wide open, yet see nothing: why, I ask, should they behave thus, unless because they "devise vain things" (Ps. ii. 1) and pursue empty dreams? Dearest brethren, let us shun this vice of self-conceit; so far as it depends upon us, let us always choose to be abject and to be guided by others, imitating thus the meekness and humility of our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom be honour and glory for ages without end. Amen.

SECOND SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL.

" Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart."—Matt. xi. 29.

The feast of to-day, my brethren, commemorates the conversion of St. Paul or rather the transformation of Saul the persecutor into Paul the Apostle. For on this day he became like that little child of whom the Lord says in the Gospel, speaking, perhaps, of Himself, " Unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven " (Matt. xviii. 3, 4).* I have said the little one presented to us here as our model by the Lord was probably Himself, because although He is " the great Lord and exceedingly to be praised " (Ps. xlvii. 2), He is also the " little One " That is " given to us " (Is. ix. 6) ; and it was not as great He showed Himself on earth, but as little, in order to win our love and to give us an impressive example of that humility which is so necessary for us. Therefore, my brother, let thy turning be towards that little Child (Cant. vii. 10), to learn from Him how to be little : do thou also after thy conversion become as a little one. For hear how plainly He informs thee in another passage who that Child is Whom He bids thee

* In the opinion of some authors, this child was St. Martel, afterwards a disciple of St. Peter, by whom he was sent to preach the Gospel in Gaul. Another tradition identifies him with St. Ignatius, Martyr, the illustrious Bishop of Antioch —(Translator.)

to take for thy model, where clearly proposing for thy imitation in His own Person the virtues characteristic of little ones He says, " Learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart " (Matt. xi. 29). Here we have two ways in which we can make ourselves little, by humility and by meekness. The former belongs to the interior, the latter shows itself in our external conduct. But from the fact that they make us little we must not infer that they are little virtues, for the Master from Whom we have learned them is as great as He shows Himself little. On this day, then, Paul was converted, on this day he ceased to be Saul, and became meek and humble of heart. He revealed the humility of his heart by the confession of his mouth (Rom. x. 10) when he cried out, " Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ? " Or rather this was revealed by the treasures of grace bestowed upon him, because grace is never given with so much liberality except to a heart that is profoundly humble (James iv. 6).

Meekness, as I have said, is the humility of our external life, and consequently it is more open to observation than the interior virtue. We find a threefold manifestation of it in the conversion of Saul. Our meekness, you will observe, is exposed to danger from three sources : reproachful language, bodily hurt, and temporal losses. It is in suffering these three kinds of evil that we have to give proof of our patience and exercise all our meekness. I want you to consider now how Paul was tried in these different ways at the very time of his conversion, and how he was found worthy even then to bear the name of Paul, was found in his affliction even then truly meek and patient. " Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me ? " said the Lord, " it

is hard for thee to kick against the goad" (Acts ix. 4, 5). This surely is severe language, full of reproach, and full of menace. And with regard to Saul's body, it has been flung down and prostrated on the earth. Has he been also tried by temporal loss? Undoubtedly, he has. For the very light of his eyes has been taken from him (Ps. xxxvii. 11): "And when his eyes were opened," so we read, "he saw nothing." By the same kinds of suffering was tried and proved the patience of holy Job, whom God has exhibited to us as a most illustrious exemplar of this virtue. But I will leave you to follow out this line of thought for yourselves in your own fervent meditations. Let it suffice for me to have pointed out to you that the essence of a true conversion mostly consists in the acquisition of the virtue of meekness; so that those religious ought to be ashamed of themselves who, having the name of being converted, are still unable to endure without impatience and bitterness either bodily pain, or temporal loss, or—which is yet more pitiful—a word of reproof.

FIRST SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF THE PURIFICATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

"We have received Thy mercy, O God, in the midst of Thy temple."—Ps. xlvii. 10.

To-day, dearest brethren, the Virgin Mother brought the Lord of the temple into the temple of the Lord. Joseph also presented to the Lord, not his own, but his Lord's own beloved Son, in Whom He was well pleased (Matt. iii. 17). Simeon recognised the Just One Whom he had been expecting, and the widow Anna likewise made her profession of faith. By these four persons was thus instituted the procession of this day's festivity, which is now celebrated in every land and by every people "with the exultation of the whole earth" (Ps. xlvii. 3). Nor should we be surprised at the smallness of this first procession, because He in Whose honour it was held was as yet but a little One. Note, however, that it included no sinner: all who took part in it were just, all were holy and perfect. But, O Lord, is it only such Thou hast come to save? Let Thy compassion grow with the growth of Thy Body. "Men and beasts Thou wilt save, O Lord, when Thou hast multiplied Thy mercy, O God!" (Ps. xxxv. 7, 8). In the second procession, accordingly, we see multitudes going before and multitudes following after, and the Lord borne no longer by a Virgin but by an ass's colt (Matt. xxi. 7, 8). Therefore He now disdains no one, not even those who like beasts "have rotted in their filth" (Joel i. 17). He disdains not even such,

I say; and if they are found to be covered with the apostolic garments (Matt. xxi. 7) and imbued with the apostolic teaching, if they have purity of morals and obedience and that charity which "covereth a multitude of sins" (1 Peter iv. 8), He will not now consider them unworthy to participate in the glory of His procession. What is yet more: we can even see that for ourselves also He has reserved a share in the same glory, which to-day seems to have been conferred on so very few. And what wonder that a participation in this glory should have been reserved for us who follow Him, since it was granted in anticipation to them that went before?

Thus, holy David, king and prophet, "rejoiced that he might see this day; he saw it and was glad" (John viii. 56). For had he not seen it, how could he have sung of it, "We have received Thy mercy, O God, in the midst of Thy temple" (Ps. xlvii. 10)? This mercy of the Lord was received, therefore, by David, it was received by Simeon, we also have received it, "and as many as are ordained to life everlasting" (Acts xiii. 48): for "Jesus Christ (as) yesterday (so) to-day, and the same for ever" (Heb. xiii. 8). But notice that it is in the *midst* of the temple we receive mercy, not in the angles and corners thereof, because "there is no respect of persons with God" (Col. iii. 25). The mercy of the Lord is made common to all, it is offered to all, no man is excluded from it but such as deliberately reject it. "Thy fountains (of mercy) are conveyed abroad" (Prov. v. 16), O Lord God. Nevertheless, they still belong to Thee, and strangers shall not partake thereof (ibid. 17). He that is Thine "shall not see death before he has seen the Christ of

the Lord" (Luke ii. 26), so that he may be securely dismissed in peace (ibid. 29). What matter for wonder is it that he should be dismissed in peace who bears on his breast the Christ of the Lord? For Christ is "our peace" (Ephes. ii. 14) and He "dwelleth by faith in our hearts" (Ephes. iii. 17). But as for thee, O miserable soul, that knowest not Jesus the Guide of the way, how wilt thou set out on the road to eternity? "For some have not the knowledge of God" (1 Cor. xv. 34). How is this, brethren? "Because the Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the Light" (John iii. 19). "And the Light shineth in darkness," says the same Evangelist in another place, "and the darkness did not comprehend it" (John i. 5). As much as to say: The waters of the fountain are conveyed into the streets, but the stranger does not partake of them; mercy is found in the midst of the temple, yet is approached by none of those who are destined for everlasting misery. O ye wretched ones, "there is standing in the midst of you One Whom you know not" (John i. 26); so that dying before you have seen the Christ of the Lord, you shall not be dismissed in peace, but rather shall be snatched away by "the roaring lions, ready to devour" (Ecclus. li. 4).

"We have received Thy mercy, O God, in the midst of Thy temple." Very different, my brethren, is this shout of joyous thanksgiving from that mournful cry of a soul in sorrow, "O Lord, Thy mercy is in heaven, and Thy truth reacheth down even to the clouds" (Ps. xxxv. 6). And good cause for grief had the Psalmist when he uttered that cry. For surely you do not imagine that the mercy of God was then in the

midst of the temple and open to all whilst it remained the exclusive possession of the heaven-sprung spirits? But when the Word was made "a little less than the angels" (Ps. viii. 6), when He was made the "one Mediator of God and men" (1 Tim. ii. 5), and, as "the chief corner-stone" (Ephes. ii. 20), "made peace through the Blood of His cross both as to the things on earth and the things that are in heaven" (Col. i. 20): then and thereafter we might sing, "We have received Thy mercy, O God, in the midst of Thy temple." For we also "were by nature children of wrath" (Ephes. ii. 3), "but now have obtained mercy" (Rom. xi. 30). Of what wrath were we the children, and what is the mercy we have obtained? We were the children of ignorance, of languor, and of captivity, and we have obtained wisdom, strength, and redemption. The ignorance of the first woman, seduced by the old serpent, had blinded us, the weakness of the first man, "drawn away and allured by his own concupiscence" (James i. 14), had enfeebled us, the malice of the devil, finding us deservedly abandoned by God, had reduced us to servitude. Consequently, we were born, all of us, in the first place, absolutely ignorant of "the way of the city of our habitation" (Ps. cvi. 4); in the second place, weak and languid, so that even if the way of life were known to us, we should still have been impeded and held back by our want of vigour; and in the third place, in bondage to the most wicked and cruel of tyrants, by whose heavy yoke we should still have been miserably oppressed, though neither knowledge nor strength had been wanting to us. Undoubtedly, a misery so great needed great mercy and great compassion. And if "we are now saved from

(this threefold) wrath through Him" (Rom. v. 9). "Who of God is made unto us wisdom and justice and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor. i. 30), how vigilant ought we not to be, most dearly beloved, lest if (which God forbid!) we again incurred the divine anger, our last state should be found worse than our first (Matt. xii. 45), as being "children of wrath," not now "by nature," but by our own free will.

Therefore, dearest brethren, let us lovingly embrace the mercy which "we have received in the midst of the temple," and after the example of the blessed Anna, let us never depart from the temple of God (Luke ii. 37): "for the temple of God is holy, which you are," as says the Apostle (1 Cor. iii. 17). This mercy "is nigh to you, even in your mouths and in your hearts" (Rom. x. 8), since "Christ dwelleth by faith in your hearts." Yes, there is His temple and there is His throne, as you do not need to be informed, unless perhaps you have forgotten what is written, "The soul of the just man is the seat of wisdom."* Therefore I now exhort you with all earnestness, and I should like to exhort my dearest children again and again, yea, without ever ceasing, not to walk according to the flesh, even though living in the flesh, lest you displease God. Let us not make ourselves the friends of this world unless we desire to forfeit the friendship of God (James iv. 4). Let us "resist the devil and he will fly from us" (ibid. 7), so that we may henceforth freely "walk in the spirit" (Gal. v. 16) and live within our own hearts. "For the corruptible body is a load upon the soul," enervating and enfeebling her, "and the

* Cf. *Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles*, vol. i. p. 312, note (Mount Melleray Translation).—(Translator.)

earthly habitation presseth down the mind that museth upon many things" (Wisdom ix. 15), so that it cannot mount up to the things of heaven. Hence the Apostle tells us that "the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" (1 Cor. iii. 19); and whosoever suffers himself to be overcome by the wicked one is condemned to be his slave (John viii. 34). But it is in our hearts we receive the mercy of the Lord, it is in our hearts Christ dwelleth by faith, and it is in our hearts also He "speaketh peace unto His people, and unto His saints, and unto them that are converted to the heart" (Ps. lxxxiv. 9).

SECOND SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF THE PURIFICATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

Let them sing in the ways of the Lord, for great is the glory of the Lord."—Ps. cxxxvii. 5.

All thanks to our Saviour for having so abundantly "prevented us with the blessings of sweetness" (Ps. xx. 4), by multiplying our joys in the mysteries of His infancy! It is but a few weeks ago we were celebrating the feasts of His Nativity, Circumcision, and Manifestation to the Gentiles, and lo! another of these most sweet solemnities has dawned upon us to-day, the solemnity of His Presentation in the temple. For on this day was offered to the Creator "the noble fruit of the earth" (Is. iv. 2); on this day the "atoning Victim" (Num. v. 8), the "Victim acceptable to God" (1 Peter ii. 5), was brought into the temple by His parents, was awaited by the holy elders, and was presented to the Lord by Mary's virginal hands. Mary and Joseph came to "offer the sacrifice of praise" (Ps. cvi. 22), the true "morning oblation" (Exod. xxix. 41), whilst Simeon and Anna received the Saviour Child into their arms. These four persons formed the procession which is commemorated to-day with joyous festivities throughout the four quarters of the earth. And inasmuch as we ourselves also, contrary to our custom on other solemnities,* are to have a festive

* One of the charges brought by Peter Abelard against St. Bernard and his brother Cistercians was that they had all but banished processions from their solemnities: "Processionum fere totam venerationem a vobis exclusistis" (Ep. v.

procession to-day, it will be well, I think, to consider with attention the manner and the order in which we shall proceed. We shall walk two and two, holding in our hands lighted candles, lighted not from ordinary fire, but from fire that has been previously consecrated in the church by the blessing of the priest. More ver, the last shall be first and the first last (Matt. xx. 16) in our procession, and we shall "sing in the ways of the Lord, for great is the glory of the Lord" (Ps. cxxxvii. 5). There is a special significance, my brethren, in our proceeding thus, two and two; for it was in this order and with the purpose of commending fraternal love* and community life that Christ sent forth the seventy-two disciples, as the Evangelist informs us (Luke x. 1). They who insist on walking alone in the

ad Bernardum). It might be answered that a main point in the Cistercian reform was the retrenchment of all luxuries, even in the domain of ceremonial worship, and the adoption of an austere simplicity in everything. Besides, the sons of Citeaux, having to live by the labour of their hands, had no time for such magnificent liturgical pageants as might be witnessed at Cluny and other places: they were often even compelled, particularly during the harvest season, when the crops had to be saved and gathered in, to intermit the celebration of Mass and to recite the diurnal hours in the open fields. Cf. *Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles*, vol. ii. p. 73 (Mount Melleray Translation.)—(Translator.)

* "Our Lord and Saviour, dearest brethren, admonishes us sometimes by His words, sometimes also by His actions. For His very actions are often precepts: although performed in silence, they teach us what we ought to do. Thus, He sent His disciples, two and two, to preach the Gospel, because there are two precepts of charity, namely, the love of God and the love of one's neighbour, and because, for the love of charity, there must be at least two. For, properly speaking, one cannot have charity towards oneself: love must tend outwards to deserve the name of charity. Therefore, in sending His disciples to preach, two and two, the Lord designed to insinuate that he who has no love for his neighbour should never undertake the office of preacher."—St. Gregory the Great, Hom. xvii. in Evang.—(Translator.)

procession spoil the order of the procession, and become troublesome, not only to themselves but to the whole community as well. "These are they who separate themselves, sensual men, not having the Spirit" (Jude 19), nor "careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephes. iv. 3). But as "it is not good for man to be alone" (Gen. ii. 18), so neither is it permitted him to appear before the Lord with empty hands (Exod. xxiii. 15). For if even those whom "no man hath hired" are rebuked for remaining idle (Matt. xx. 6), what do not they deserve who, although they have been hired, are found idle still? For "faith without good works is dead" James ii. 26). But our good works must be done in the fervour of charity and with an ardent desire to please God, in order that we may be found with "lamps burning in our hands" (Luke xii. 35). Otherwise there is much reason to fear that He Who has said in the Gospel, "I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be enkindled?" (ibid. 49), finding us lukewarm will begin to vomit us out of His mouth (Apoc. iii. 16). That fire whereof the Saviour speaks is the holy and blessed Fire Which the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world and Which we bless in the churches, according to what is written, "In the churches bless ye God the Lord" (Ps. lxvii. 27). Our adversary also—that malicious emulator of the works of God—he also, I say, has a fire of his own: the fire of carnal concupiscence, the fire of envy and ambition, which the Saviour came not to enkindle but to quench. And whosoever shall presume to "offer before the Lord this strange fire" (Levit. x. 1), even though he should have Aaron for

his father (ibid.), he "shall die in his iniquity" (Jer. xxxi. 30).

But in addition to the common life, and the fraternal charity, and the good works, and the holy fervour of which I have been speaking, we require also humility, one of the greatest and the most necessary of the virtues, in order that "with honour we may prevent one another" (Rom. xii. 10), and that each one may prefer to himself even his juniors: for that is the perfection of humility and the fulness of justice. Furthermore, since "God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. ix. 7), and since one of the fruits of charity is "joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xiv. 17), let us "sing" as I have said, "in the ways of the Lord, for great is the glory of the Lord," let us "sing to the Lord a new canticle, because He hath done wonderful things" (Ps. xcvii. 1). But if in all these practices of devotion any of us should neglect to advance and to "go forward from virtue to virtue" (Ps. lxxxiii. 8): let such a one know that he belongs not to the Saviour's procession, but is standing still, or rather is going backwards. For in the way of life not to advance is to fall back: there "a man never continueth in the same state" (Job xiv. 11). Now our spiritual progress—as I remember to have told you often already—mainly consists in this: that we never "count ourselves to have apprehended," but that "forgetting the things that are behind and stretching forth ourselves to those that are before" (Phil. iii. 13), we strive unceasingly to become better, and keep our imperfections constantly exposed to the eyes of divine mercy.

THIRD SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF THE PURIFICATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

"He was offered because it was His own will."—Is. liii. 7.

We celebrate to-day, my brethren, the feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary's Purification, which was accomplished forty days after the birth of her Divine Son, as prescribed in the law of Moses (Lev. xii. 2-4). For we read in the Book of Leviticus that a woman who, in the ordinary way, gives birth to a man-child, "shall be unclean seven days, and on the eighth day the infant shall be circumcised"; thereafter, intent on cleansing and purifying herself, she abstained, such was the law, from entering the sanctuary for the space of three and thirty days, at the expiration of which she should offer her child to the Lord with the gifts enjoined. But who does not perceive that the very first phrase of this law sets the Mother of Christ free from its obligation? It looks, indeed, as if Moses was about to say simply, "If a woman gives birth to a man-child she shall be unclean," but fearing to be found guilty of the crime of blasphemy against the Lord's Mother, he premised the restricting phrase, "in the ordinary way." For where was the necessity of these words unless he foresaw that Mary was to bring forth without detriment to her virginity? It is manifest, therefore, that this law was not made for the Mother of the Lord, since she did not give birth to her Son in the ordinary way, as was predicted by Jeremias when he said, "the Lord hath created a new thing

upon the earth." What new thing, do you ask? "A woman shall compass a man" (Jer. xxxi. 22). Not by man's co-operation, not according to the ordinary law of human conception, shall she conceive, but remaining ever pure and undefiled she "shall compass a man," so that, in the words of another Prophet, the Lord, coming in and going out by this Eastern Gate, shall nevertheless leave it always shut (Ezech. xliv. 2).

Let us imagine, therefore, that Mary was disturbed in mind about submitting to this ordinance of Moses, and argued thus with herself: "What need have I of purification? Why should I abstain from entering the sanctuary, I, who, without the co-operation of man, have become the living temple of the Holy Spirit? Why should I not go into the temple of the Lord, who have given birth to the Lord of the temple? In this virginal conception, in this child-birth, there has been nothing impure, nothing illicit, nothing that needs to be cleansed: for the Infant Whom I have brought forth is Himself the very Fountain of all purity, and He has come into the world to 'make purgation of sins' (Heb. i. 3). What has this legal purification to purify in me, who, spotlessly pure already, have been made purer still by my immaculate parturition?"

It is true, O most blessed Virgin, it is very true that thou hast no cause, no necessity for purification. But, tell me, had thy Son any need of circumcision? Be, therefore, amongst women as an ordinary woman, because thy Child made Himself as one of the ordinary children of men. If He willed to be circumcised, surely He wills also and much more to be offered to His Father. Offer thy Son, then, O holy Virgin, present to the Lord the "blessed Fruit of thy womb" (Luke i. 42).

Offer for the reconciliation of us all the " living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God " (Rom. xii. 1). Certainly, God the Father will accept this new Oblation, this most precious Victim of Whom He says, " This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased " (Matt. iii. 17).

But it seems to me, brethren, that this first oblation of the Infant Saviour has about it something peculiarly sweet. For now He is merely presented to the Lord, redeemed with innocent birds and carried home again immediately by His parents. The time will come, however, when He shall be offered, no longer in the temple, no longer between the arms of holy Simeon, but outside the city and between the arms of the cross. The time will come when, so far from being redeemed Himself with foreign blood, He shall redeem all other men with His own Blood: for He is the redemption that the Father " hath sent to His people " (Ps. xc. 9). That will be the " evening sacrifice," this in the temple is the " morning sacrifice " (Exod. xxix. 41, Ps. cxl. 2). The latter is the more joyous, but the former will have greater fulness, because in it the Victim shall have arrived at the fulness of His years, whereas in the other He is offered in His infancy. But of both oblations may be understood what the Prophet predicted, " He was offered because it was His own will " (Is. liii. 7). For to-day, in the temple, He was offered, not because there was any necessity requiring this, not because He was bound by the prescription of the law, but solely because He willed it. And with regard to the sacrifice of the cross also, it was not for His deserts He was offered thereon, or because He was unable to resist the power of the Jews, but because such was

His own will. Therefore "I will voluntarily sacrifice to Thee, O God" (Ps. liii. 8), because Thou wast voluntarily offered for my salvation, and not through any necessity of Thine own.

But, dearest brethren, what have we to offer? Or "what shall we render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to us?" (Ps. cxv. 3). He offered for us the most precious victim He possessed, yea, a victim the most precious that can be conceived. Let us, therefore, do what we can, and offer Him the best that we have, which, namely, is our own selves. He sacrificed Himself for thee: who art thou that hesitatest to sacrifice thyself for Him? Oh, who will grant me that so lofty a majesty may condescend to accept my poor oblation! Lord, I can boast of but two miserable possessions: I mean my body and my soul. Would that I could perfectly offer them to Thee as a sacrifice of praise! For it were better for me, it were far more glorious and advantageous, that I should be sacrificed to Thee than abandoned to myself. "My soul is troubled within myself" (Ps. xli. 7), but in Thee my spirit shall rejoice (Luke i. 47), that is, if it be truly offered to Thee. Brethren, whilst the Lord was still by His own decree destined to die, the Jews were wont to offer Him dead victims, but now: "I live, saith the Lord: I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezech. xxxiii. 11). The Lord, then, desires not my death, and shall I not willingly offer Him my life? This is a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, "an atoning sacrifice" (Exod. xxix. 33). But at the oblation of the Lord in the temple there were, so we read, three presences, and the Lord expects to find three things present

also in our oblation of ourselves. The former oblation was attended by the presence of Joseph, the husband of the Lord's Mother and the reputed father of the Lord Himself, by the presence of the Virgin Mother, and by the presence of the Child Jesus, Who was Himself the Victim being offered. Accordingly, let there be in our oblation virile constancy, continence of the flesh, and humility of heart. Let there be, I say, in the will a manly purpose to persevere, in the flesh the purity of a virgin, and in the heart the simplicity and humility of a little child. Amen.

FIRST SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF ST. VICTOR.*

February 26th.

"When thou shalt sit to eat with a rich man, consider diligently what is set before thy face, knowing that it behoveth thee to prepare the like."—Prov. xxiii. 1, 2, juxta LXX.

Brethren, the life and singular glory of St. Victor enkindle in "all who are upright of heart" (Ps. xciii. 15) the desire not so much to share in his glory, as to imitate his virtues. For to aspire to glory without first practising virtue, to wish to be crowned before one has "lawfully striven" (2 Tim. ii. 5), betrays not an upright but a perverted heart. "It is vain for you to rise before the light," sings the Psalmist (Ps. cxxvi. 2). So in truth it is. It is vain for him to endeavour to raise himself to the summit of glory who has not yet begun to shine with the splendour of virtue. It is vain for the foolish virgins to rise to meet the Bridegroom when their lamps are extinguished (Matt. xxv.). And they are called foolish virgins for no other reason, as it seems to me, than because they glory in their empty lamps, having in them none of the oil of virtue. "But God forbid that I should glory" (Gal. vi. 14) save with the glory of them at whose happiness the Prophet rejoices and says to the Lord, "They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance, and in Thy

* The Office for the feast of this Saint was composed by St. Bernard at the request of Guido, Abbot of the monastery of Moutier-Ramey, in the diocese of Troyes, where St. Victor's relics were preserved.—(Translator.)

name they shall rejoice all the day, and in Thy justice they shall be exalted" (Ps. lxxxviii. 16). And he adds, "For Thou art the glory of their virtue" (ibid. 17), thus commending very beautifully, not their own glory, but "the glory of their virtue." For the glory that springs not from virtue is glory undue; to desire it would be rash, to accept it would be dangerous. Virtue is the ladder whereby we must mount to glory. Yea, virtue may be called the mother of glory. Glory "is deceitful and beauty is vain" (Prov. xxxi. 30) unless they have their source in virtue. It is to this alone that glory is due by right and rendered without danger.

St. Victor lacks neither virtue nor glory. But it will be worth our while to ascertain how and in what order he came to be possessed of the two. He strove courageously and manfully conquered, and thus deserved to be "crowned with glory and honour" (Ps. viii. 6). So brave a warrior, so modest a victor: how could he have remained without glory? But not even "in the day of his virtue" (Ps. cix. 3) was glory wanting to him, for his signs and prodigies had already made him wonderful in the eyes of all. Most dearly beloved, we shall find in the life of St. Victor not only what is worthy of our admiration but also what we may imitate with profit. I admire that miracle by which he obtained wine in the wilderness, not from grapes, but from the waters of a fountain. I am filled with wonder and astonishment to find that, whilst as yet but an infant in his mother's womb, he was already a source of terror to the terrible demons; for even then they had a foreknowledge of what he was to be and called him by his name. Nor was that name an empty title, since the unborn babe was proved a real victor by the flight

of the enemy and the testimony wrung from them. Who again can help wondering to behold a thief suddenly possessed by the devil and delivered, repentant, almost immediately, at the prayer of the man of God? And who does not consider it to be a matter worthy of all wonder and admiration that a man, still clothed with the flesh of his mortality, pierces the heavens with his gaze, fixes his carnal eyes on the Supernal Splendour, "sees the visions of God" (Ezech. i. 1), is consoled with the music of angelic songs and instructed by angelic tutors? These and such like prodigies are recorded in the life of the Saint, rather to be admired than to be imitated. And not without reason do I say we must not desire to imitate them, because on the one hand they are not necessary to secure our salvation, and on the other, we cannot aspire to them without exposing our salvation to serious risk. It is much safer to emulate the saints in the things which appear more solid than in those which appear more sublime, in what appertains less to glory than to virtue.

Therefore, my dearest brethren, let us strive to imitate St. Victor in his virtues, since we cannot, even if we would, imitate him in his miracles. Let us strive to imitate him in his abstinence and in his fervent charity; let us imitate him in his sweetness of disposition, in his purity of body, in his custody of the tongue, in his innocence of soul. Let us learn from his example to govern our temper, to guard our speech, to give less time to sleep, to pray oftener, to "admonish one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual canticles" (Col. iii. 16), to add our nights to our days in the divine service, and to occupy all our time with singing the

praises of God. Let us "be zealous for the better gifts" (1 Cor. xii. 31). Let us learn of Victor, because, like His Master, he was "meek and humble of heart" (Matt. xi. 29). Let us imitate him, I say, in his charity towards the poor, in his hospitality towards strangers, in his patience with sinners, in his kindness to all. For these are the "better gifts." In these we have the pattern to which we should be conformed, whilst the miracles contain the glory which overpowers us. The miracles give us joy, but the virtues give us edification; the former excite our wonder, but the latter help to bring us on our way. Let us feast, most dearly beloved, for we have been invited to a rich man's table (Prov. xxiii. 1), to a table "abounding with bread" (Luke xv. 17) and laden with spiritual delicacies. Can you doubt that he is a rich man, who supports us by his example, protects us by his merits, gladdens us by his signs? Rich unquestionably he is, at whose solemn banquet to-day angels and men are assembled together, the former to participate in the delights and the gladness, the latter to obtain new strength and courage for their heavenward journey. For a life such as his that is filled with good works may be justly regarded as a well-furnished table. But every kind of food found thereon is not intended for all without distinction: each of the guests is expected to take only what he perceives will be good and suitable for him.

As for me, following the wholesome counsel of the Wise Man, I will "diligently consider what is set before my face" (Prov. xxiii. 1). I am cautioned to take what is mine and not to touch that which belongs to others (Matt. xx. 14). I will not stretch out my hand to the glory of the miracles, lest by attempting

to appropriate what has not been assigned to me from above, I should deserve to lose even that which I seem to have obtained. I will not imitate Victor by lifting up my eyes to penetrate the secrets of heaven, lest, "overwhelmed with glory" (Prov. xxv. 27), I should have to turn away my gaze in confusion, and begin too late to recall that other counsel of the Wise Man, "Seek not the things that are too high for thee, and search not into things above thy ability" (Ecclus. iii. 22). I see them setting on the table new wine made from water which has blushed under the blessing of the man of God: I will not touch it, however, because I know it is not destined for me, since I have not the like power of changing the elements and transforming the natures of things. I notice too at the table of Victor that miracle by which he heard the angelic songs: shall I therefore expect that to me also it shall be given to hear the heavenly choirs, or at any rate to see before me the apocalyptic "harpers harping on their harps" (Apoc. xiv. 2)? Victor, whilst yet living in the flesh, commanded the demons, and after departing this life delivered a captive from the chains that bound his body. There are more meats on the rich man's table, but they are not placed there for my use: they have a delightful savour, certainly, but my soul will not touch them (Job vi. 7), because I am poor and should not be able to "prepare the like" (Prov. xxiii. 2, juxta LXX). But if I "diligently consider," I shall see before me on the table of the Saint an impartial strictness in judging self, a faithful observance of discipline, a mirror of sanctity, a pattern of life, the image of every virtue. Meats of this kind I can take without presumption and assimilate with profit; and if I in my

turn neglect to prepare the like they shall be sternly demanded back.

Let me tell you further what kinds of food I may rightly consider to be served for my use. If I am offered "the bread of sorrow" (Ps. cxxvi. 2) from the table of the rich man, I will accept it with all confidence, "for I am needy and poor" (Ps. lxxxvi. 1). Then "my tears shall be my bread day and night" (Ps. xli. 4), and I shall "mingle my drink with weeping" (Ps. ci. 10). Such is my portion, because I have committed crimes worthy to be wept for. Nor, as I think, shall I weary of this food, since "He Who added knowledge" of my offences unto me, "added also sorrow" (Ecclus. i. 18, juxta LXX). Moreover, should I find any examples of temperance, of justice, of prudence, or of fortitude: these I shall help myself to without the least hesitation, as knowing that I shall have to "prepare the like." Yes, my brethren, I shall have no doubt that such meats are destined for me and will be reclaimed from me. Surely we do not suppose that signs and wonders will be exacted from us, that we should be solicitous to "prepare the like" for our rich host. For they are only the dishes intended to adorn the table of the rich man who has invited us: they are not the meats provided for the poor. Do thou, therefore, that art invited, "consider diligently" and discriminate between what he has destined for thy use and what is set forth merely to enhance his own state. For thou must not imagine that everything placed on the board is meant for thee. What if wine should be set before thee in a golden goblet? The wine is offered for thy use, but not the goblet: drink the wine, but replace the cup. So the father of the family, whilst commu-

nicating examples of good works and models of conduct to those of his household, reserves to himself exclusively the glory of his miracles. But in both the one and the other we ought to glorify Him by Whose grace the saints live holily and by Whose power they work wonders, Who Himself liveth and reigneth one God in Three Persons for ever and ever. Amen.

SECOND SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF ST. VICTOR.

"The just wait for me until Thou reward me."—Ps. cxli. 8.

"Rejoice in the Lord" (Phil. iv. 2), most dearly beloved, Who, amongst the other priceless gifts which His goodness is constantly showering upon us, willed also to bless the world with the birth of a man whose example He designed to be for many the means of salvation. "Again I say, rejoice" (ibid.), because Victor has been withdrawn from the world and united to God, so that many more may be saved through his intercession. Our "compassionate and merciful Lord" (Ps. cii. 8) has now from amongst men one for whose sake He may condone the sins of men, and our compassionate and merciful advocate has found a suitable time and place for interceding in our behalf, a place of peace and a time of repose. "He was seen upon earth and conversed with men" (Bar. iii. 38), in order to give us an example; he was raised up to heaven in order to afford us protection. Here he taught us the way of life, there he invites us to glory. Having on earth exhorted men to the practice of virtue, he has now become their mediator, through whom they hope to obtain the crown. A good mediator is Victor, who, having nothing more to ask for himself, has no desire but for our happiness, pleads solely for us, and transfers to us all the fruit of his supplication. For what should he seek for himself, since he has now need of nothing? "The Lord preserveth him, and giveth him life, and

maketh him blessed" (Ps. xl. 3) in glory. "He wanteth nothing," because the Lord Who ruleth him "hath set him in the place of pasture" (Ps. xxii. 1, 2). This, brethren, is the day of his glorious exaltation, this is "the day of the joy of his heart" (Cant. iii. 11): "let us be glad and rejoice therein" (Ps. cxvii. 24). He has "entered into the powers of the Lord" (Ps. lxx. 16): let us again rejoice, because he now possesses more power to save us.

To-day Victor, having laid aside the body of flesh, by which alone he seemed to have been prevented hitherto from entering into bliss, with equal delight and liberty has penetrated into the holy of holies "made like to the saints in glory" (Ecclus. xlv. 2). To-day, at the invitation of the supreme Father of the family, from the last and lowest place which, following the Saviour's counsel, he had chosen for himself on earth, this true friend has gone "up higher," and has had "glory before them that sit at table with him" (Luke xiv. 10). To-day, having despised the world and vanquished "the prince of this world" (John xiv. 30), our victorious Victor has mounted above the world to receive "a crown of glory from the hand of the Lord" (Is. lxii. 3). But he has mounted carrying with him an immense store of merits, illustrious for his triumphs, resplendent with his miracles. To-day the soldier emeritus has begun to rest from the conflict, and after the hardships and fatigues of the holy war, he has been summoned to the land of immortal joys and crowned with glory and honour. Henceforth and for ever "his soul shall dwell in good things" (Ps. xxiv. 13). Do you ask me, where? "With Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of

heaven" (Matt. viii. 11). Yes, my brethren, such is the society and such the place in which Victor's soul is now seated, glorious and exalted, full of gladness and of the praise of God. There she sits, full of sweetness and "as a bride adorned with her jewels" (Is. lxi. 10), "stayed up with flowers, compassed about with apples" (Cant. ii. 5). There, I say, she is seated free from solicitude, "flowing with delights" (Cant. viii. 5), and with plenty of leisure and repose to occupy herself with wisdom (Ecclus. xxxviii. 25). She that formerly "sat and wept upon the rivers of Babylon" (Ps. cxxxvi. 1) is now seated at the fountain of life, and her days are passed beside the "torrent of pleasure" (Ps. xxxv. 9) whose "stream maketh the city of God joyful" (Ps. xlv. 5). She has discovered for herself "the fountain of gardens, the well of living waters" (Cant. iv. 15), and with the Samaritan woman she "is given the water of wholesome wisdom to drink" (Ecclus. xv. 3) so that she "may not thirst for ever" (John iv. 13). There is "given to her of the fruit of her hands, and her works praise her in the gates" (Prov. xxxi. 31), and she rejoices in the testimony of a good conscience (2 Cor. i. 12): I mean the testimony, not of another's conscience, but of her own. She has her seat amongst the holy angels, of whose society she is well worthy, since she burns with the same fervent desire that consumes them, and shines with the same innocence and purity wherewith they are adorned. Amongst the apostles, too, our Victor sits enthroned; neither is there any reason why he should not associate with the company of the prophets, since Whom they foretold he "glorified and bore in his body" (1 Cor. vi. 20). Nor does he who, by a bitter and long-enduring martyrdom,

immolated the living victim of his own body, consider himself alien to the victorious choirs of the martyrs.

Yes, most dearly beloved, the veteran soldier of Christ is resting now, enjoying in security the sweetness of his well-earned repose. He is now set free from all solicitude with regard to himself, yet not also with regard to us. For he has not put off the bowels of compassion at the same time with the rottenness of the flesh, nor has he put on, together with the "robe of glory" (Ecclus. vi. 32), forgetfulness both of his own mercy and of our misery. No "land of oblivion" (Ps. lxxxvii. 13) is that where the soul of Victor abides, neither is it a land of labour, where toil would engross his attention: his home is no longer upon earth but in heaven. Are we to believe that the heavenly habitation hardens the souls admitted within its bounds, or robs them of their memory, or despoils them of their mercy? Dearest brethren, the case is quite the contrary. Hearts dilate instead of contracting in the amplitude of heaven, minds are filled with gladness, but do not change their sentiments, affections are widened rather than narrowed. The light of God's countenance tranquillises, but does not obscure the memory: we shall not forget what we know in that light, on the contrary, what we do not know we shall learn. Those celestial spirits who have lived with God from the beginning of the world: do they, for the reason that they have their home in heaven, despise the earth and do not rather visit it frequently? Does the fact that they "always see the face of the Father" (Matt. xviii. 10) prevent them from exercising the ministry of mercy? Most certainly not. For the Apostle assures us that "they are all ministering

spirits, sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation" (Heb. i. 14). What then? The holy angels busy themselves about and willingly succour mortals, and can we believe that the blessed of our own race are ignorant of our concerns and do not know how to compassionate us in the midst of the evils to which they themselves have been likewise exposed? That they who have never had any experience of suffering pity us in ours, whereas "they that are come out of great tribulation" (Apoc. vii. 14) have no longer any remembrance of the miseries of their earthly life? But I know who it is that said to the Lord, "The just wait for me until Thou reward me" (Ps. cxli. 8). Now Victor is one of the just, therefore we cannot doubt that he is waiting to see us, as himself, rewarded. He is not like that butler of King Pharao, who, having been restored to favour with his lord, used his influence for his own advantage exclusively and remembered no more the imprisoned Prophet. No, Victor is the minister of Christ and walks in the footsteps of his Master (John xii. 26). Christ did not forget His promise, nor did He refuse a participation in His glory to them that participated in His passion. Now, the disciple does not contradict his Master. Victor cannot do anything of himself but what he seeth (his Master) doing, and "what things soever He doth," the disciple "also doth in like manner" (John v. 19).*

Our Victor has entered now into the abode of the blessed, which, even whilst he lived here below, lay open to his happy eyes; now in truth he "beholds the glory of the Lord with open face" (2 Cor. iii. 18). But

* On same subject, cf. Sermon XXVI. on the Canticle of Canticles.

absorbed though he is in divine contemplation, he nevertheless " hath not forgotten the cry of the poor " (Ps. ix. 13). O happy vision, by which Victor is now " transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord " (2 Cor. iii. 18) ! He was already a great victor when as yet but a little warrior, for even before he was born he put the devils to flight ; then, living " among sinners " and daily advancing in virtue and merit, at length " he was translated " to glory (Wisdom iv. 10). O man of singular holiness, who was a saint before he saw the light and was victor in fact before he was Victor in name ! For whilst still enclosed in his mother's womb he triumphed over the demon. O sanctity admirable in the eyes of the very angels, which, with equal ardour though with opposite dispositions, the good spirits approach and the bad spirits fly from ! And it is not easy to decide which is the better proof of the holiness of our saint, the favour of the former or the fear of the latter. Dwelling on the earth in body, and in heaven in thought and affection, he used often to hear with emotions of inexpressible delight the sweet voices of the supernal spirits at one time announcing to him familiarly some secret from above, at another chanting their celestial songs. Verily, O Victor, thine own spirit was one of those jewels wherewith thou didst see the cross adorned. For it was then truly fastened to the cross when it was admitted to the divine glory and began to shine with the reflexion of the light it contemplated. He Who animated thee with His own Spirit in the combat opened His arms to receive thee when the victory was won. O victorious soul that, flying away like a sparrow (Ps. x. 2), hast thus escaped the snares of the world :

look down, I implore thee, look down upon our incautious souls perilously entangled in these snares, and deliver us by thy protection.

O soldier emeritus, who hast now exchanged the toils and hardships of the Christian warfare for the happiness and repose of the blessed: turn thine eyes towards us, thy weak and inexperienced brothers-in-arms, who in the midst of hostile swords and "the spirits of wickedness" (Ephes. vi. 12) are occupied in celebrating thy praises. O illustrious Victor, who hast triumphed most gloriously over heaven and earth, with noble pride disdaining the glory of the one and bearing away with holy violence the kingdom of the other (Matt. xi. 12); look down from thy throne on high upon us in bondage here, and let it be the consummation of thy victory to have made us feel that thou hast finally conquered for us also. For if thou owest thy name to the victories thou hast won, that name will only find its complete justification in our deliverance. Certainly there will be something wanting to its perfect realisation so long as we, who are thine, have not yet been emancipated. How pious, how sweet, how consoling it is, O Victor, in this "place of affliction" (Ps. xliii. 20) and in "the body of this death" (Rom. vii. 24), to sing to thee, to worship thee, to invoke thee! "Thy name and thy remembrance" (Is. xxvi. 8) "are as a dropping honeycomb" (Cant. iv. 11) on the lips of us, poor captives; they are as "honey and milk under the tongue" (ibid.) of them that delight in the thought of thee. Therefore, O noble athlete, O sweet patron, O faithful advocate, "arise to help us" (Ps. xxxiv. 2), so that we may rejoice at our deliverance and thou mayest glory in

the consummation of thy triumph. Almighty Father, we have sinned against Thee and become as "alien children" (Ps. xvii. 46); but we have drawn nigh to Thee again in the person of Victor. Oh, may he who conquered his own passions, conquer also Thine anger, justly enkindled against us, and reconcile us once more to Thy grace! O victorious Jesus, we glorify Thee in our Victor, as knowing that it is Thou Who hast conquered in him. Grant us, most merciful Jesus, so to glory in the victory Victor has won in Thee that he may never forget our necessities. Son of God, inspire him with the will to remember us always in Thy sight, and to take it upon himself to plead our cause at Thine awful tribunal, Thou Who with the Father and the Holy Ghost livest and reignest one God for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF ST. BENEDICT.

MARCH 21ST.

"He shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season."—Ps. i. 3.

My brethren, when I see "you coming together into one place" (1 Cor. xi. 20) to hear the words of salvation, a violent fear comes over me lest perhaps some amongst you may not receive them with due respect and as it is necessary to receive the words of God. For I am not ignorant that "the earth that drinketh in the rain which cometh often upon it," and bringeth forth no fruit, shall be "reprobate and very near unto a curse" (Heb. vi. 7, 8). For my part, indeed, I should prefer to bestow upon you, if I could, always blessings, never the contrary. Or rather I earnestly wish that your Heavenly Father's blessing—not mine, although through His condescension you receive it from my mouth—may remain for you always a blessing and never be changed to a curse.

We celebrate to-day, dearest brethren, the entrance into immortal life of our glorious master, St. Benedict. Therefore, in accordance with my custom, I have to preach to you now a formal discourse in his honour and on the virtuous example he has left us. The most sweet name of Benedict ought to awaken in our souls sentiments of gladness and respect, because it is the name of our guide, our master, and our lawgiver. For myself, I find delight and consolation in the very thought of him, although I can never pronounce this blessed father's name without a feeling of confusion.

Let me explain the reason. Following his example, I, with you, have renounced the world and embraced the monastic life; but I have also in common with him the title of abbot, in which you do not share. Benedict was an abbot and I too am an abbot. But oh, what an abbot he was and what an abbot am I! The title is the same in both, but in one it is only "the shadow of a great name." The ministry also is the same, but alas for me, how different are the ministers! how different the administrations! Woe is me! O blessed Benedict, if in the world to come I shall be as far removed from thee as I find myself distant now from the model of thy holiness! But it is not necessary for me to dwell upon this point in addressing you, my brethren, who, as I cannot doubt, know me perfectly. I only ask you to lighten with your brotherly compassion my heavy burden of shame and fear.

Since, nevertheless, this ministry has been entrusted to me, "and I have not what to set before you" (Luke xi. 6), I will ask of the blessed Benedict three loaves wherewith to nourish you. I will pray him to feed you with his sanctity, with his justice, and with his piety. Remember, most dearly beloved, that not all who took part in the procession of the Lord strewed their garments in the way before Him. In that procession, I say (which by God's grace we shall soon be commemorating), when the multitude met the Lord, as He came to meet His passion, mounted upon an ass's colt, not all spread their garments in the road: some were content with cutting branches from the trees (Matt. xxi. 8). This was nothing very great: they freely gave what they had freely received (Matt. x. 8). Nevertheless, even these were not quite useless, nor do

we find that they were excluded from the procession. But you, my brethren, are each of you the Saviour's pious beast of burden, and each of you can say with the Prophet, "I am become as a beast before Thee, and I am always with Thee" (Ps. lxxii. 23): it is upon you that Christ is seated, for "the soul of the just man is the seat of wisdom," and the Apostle declares Christ to be "the Power of God and the Wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i. 24). And since I have no garments to spread before your feet, I will endeavour at least to cut branches from the trees, so that my ministry may contribute something, however small, to so great a procession.

A noble tree was the blessed Benedict, tall and fruit-bearing, and "like a tree which is planted near the running waters" (Ps. i. 3). Now, where do we find the running waters? In the valleys, undoubtedly, because, as the Psalmist sings, "between the midst of the hills the waters shall pass" (Ps. ciii. 10). Who does not know that even the mountain torrents shun the heights and always flow down to the low-lying valleys between them? It is thus, my brethren, it is thus that "God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble" (James iv. 6). Here, then, thou canst safely set thy foot, whosoever thou art that art Christ's beast of burden: tread upon this branch, walk along the way that winds through the valley. For "the old serpent" (Apoc. xx. 2) has fixed his seat on the mountain (Is. xiv. 13), where "he biteth the horse's heels that his rider may fall backward" (Gen. xlix. 17). Therefore, choose the valley to walk in, choose the valley to plant in. For we are not accustomed to select the mountains as the proper place even for planting trees,

because they are usually dry and stony. But in the valleys is found fertility of soil: there our plants shall prosper, there we shall reap the "full ears" (Gen. xli. 26), there our seed shall yield fruit a hundredfold (Matt. xiii. 8), according to what is written, "The valleys shall abound with corn" (Ps. lxiv. 14). You notice, my brethren, how the valley is everywhere praised, how humility is everywhere applauded. Let this, accordingly, be the place of your planting, where you shall find the "running waters": that is to say, you shall there receive an abundance of spiritual grace, "and the waters that are above the heavens shall praise the name of the Lord" (Ps. cxlviii. 4, 5), that is, the divine benedictions shall cause you to bless His holy name. Dearest brethren, let us fix ourselves here in the soil of humility, and let us be as plants firmly rooted lest otherwise we should wither. Let no gust of wind, however strong, have power to remove us from our place, as it is written, "if the spirit of him that hath power ascend upon thee, leave not thy place" (Eccles. x. 4). For no temptation can prevail against us so long as we do not "walk in wonderful things above us" (Ps. cxxx. 1) but remain firmly and irremovably "rooted and founded" (Ephes. iii. 17) in humility. Thus was this holy confessor of the Lord, whose feast we are celebrating, "planted near the running waters" and so he "brought forth his fruit in due season" (Ps. i. 3).

My brethren, there are trees that bring forth no fruit at all, and there are trees that bring forth fruit indeed, but not their own fruit, and there are trees that bring forth their own fruit, yet not in due season. There are trees, I say, that do not bear any fruit, as,

for instance, oaks and elms and other forest trees. But no one ever plants such trees in his garden, because they are not fruit-bearing; or if they do yield some kind of fruit, it is a kind fit, not for human use, but only to be the food of swine. These worthless trees are a type of "the children of this world" (Luke xvi. 8) who spend their time "in rioting and drunkenness" (Rom. xiii. 13), in gluttony, and in the pleasures of the table, and in the free indulgence of every evil desire and appetite. Such satisfactions are the food of swine, the flesh of which the true Jew, that is to say, the faithful Christian, is not allowed to eat, nor ought he to associate with these animals (Deut. xiv. 8). For just as swine's flesh, when eaten, is united with our flesh so as to become "one flesh" (Matt. xix. 6) with us, so he who violates the precept of the Lord associates himself to the unclean spirit, and by cleaving to him becomes one devil with him. And this is the very reason why it was forbidden to offer swine in sacrifice to the Lord, because, namely, that animal is a type of the foul demons, who, repudiating all that is clean, and delighting in nothing but filthiness, are always glad to wallow in the slough of vice and sin. Hence we read in the Gospel that the accursed legion, when cast forth from the man they had possessed, begged to be sent into a herd of swine, as into animals allied to themselves, and they were not refused (Mark v. 9-13). It is for such spiritual swine that those unprofitable trees, to the root of which the axe seems to be already laid (Matt. iii. 10), bring forth their fruit, such as it is.

As for the trees that bring forth fruit, but not their own fruit: they signify hypocrites, who, like Simon of Cyrene, carry a cross that is not their own. Having

no religious intention in what they do or suffer, they require to be forced: they are compelled to submit to what they dislike by the love of vainglory which they ambition. By the words added, "in due season," is reproved the impatience of some who want to bring forth their fruit before the proper time. Is it not the case that when our fruit-trees bloom too early we are full of fear for the unseasonable blossoms? So are there some whose fruit does not ripen well because its appearance is premature. These, my brethren, are they who in the beginning of their conversion to God are so presumptuous as to desire to yield fruit at once for the benefit of others, hastening to do that which the law forbids in the words, "Thou shalt not work with the firstling of a cow and thou shalt not shear the firstlings of thy sheep" (Deut. xv. 19). Do you wish to know with what solicitude our holy father avoided falling into this mistake? That branch also I will place before you. For three whole years the blessed Benedict lived concealed from men and known only to God. He brought forth fruit in abundance, as I need not tell you, but it was in due season. For he did not think it was then the time for bearing fruit when he was being assaulted by such grievous temptations of the flesh, that he was on the point of yielding and abandoning his vocation. Nor will I omit to offer you this branch as well, because although bristling, in a manner, with the thorns of the briers, amongst which Benedict, the beloved of the Lord, rolled himself, it is nevertheless extremely useful. It is useful for the Lord's beast of burden, to guard him against the pitfalls of temptation, lest by consenting he plunge into them; and to encourage him rather to resist, to "do

manfully and wait for the Lord" (Ps. xxvi. 14), lest otherwise he should lose heart altogether. Here, therefore, O rational beast of Christ, thou oughtest to set thy foot; and learn from our holy father's example never to yield to temptation, no matter what the violence of its onslaught may be, or to regard such a temptation as a sign that thou art abandoned by God: but remember what is written, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee and thou shalt glorify Me" (Ps. xlix. 15).

The blessed Benedict, therefore, as I have said, did not consider that it was then the time for bringing forth fruit whilst he was still harassed by violent temptation. That time came, however, and "he brought forth his fruit in due season." To this fruit belong the three things whereof I have already made mention: his sanctity, his justice, and his piety. His sanctity is proved by his miracles, his piety by his teaching, his justice by his life. Thou beholdest, O beast of burden of Christ, the branches verdant with foliage, blooming with blossoms, laden with fruit. Walk upon all these so that thou mayest "make straight steps with thy feet" (Heb. xii. 13). But to what purpose do I place the holy man's miracles before thee? Is it that thou mayest desire to emulate them? Most certainly not, but that thou mayest stand upon them for support, in other words, that thou mayest feel confidence and joy in the thought that thou art placed under the care of such a pastor and hast merited to have the assistance of so powerful a patron. Can it be doubted that he who had so much power upon earth is now very powerful in heaven, where he has been exalted to a sublimity of glory corresponding to

the magnitude of his grace? For, as you know, the branches of a tree are in proportion to the greatness of its roots, and it is even said that a tree has the same number of branches to adorn it as it has of roots to support it. Thus, therefore, although we have not ourselves the power to work miracles, the miracles of our holy patron ought to be to us a source of great consolation. By his teaching, on the other hand, he enlightens us, and "directs our feet into the way of peace" (Luke i. 79). Furthermore, by the justice of his life he fortifies and encourages us. For we feel the more animated to practise what he teaches because of our assurance that he only teaches what he practised himself. The good example of a teacher is indeed a sermon in itself, "living and effectual" (Heb. iv. 12): it renders his spoken exhortation irresistibly persuasive by demonstrating in his own conduct the practicability of what he counsels.

In this way, then, the sanctity of our blessed father consoles us, his piety enlightens us, and his justice strengthens us. Oh, how great was the piety of that holy man, who not only benefited those of his own time, but showed himself solicitous also for the generations to come! It was not alone for its contemporaries on earth that this spiritual tree brought forth its fruit: even to the present hour its fruit abides and increases. Surely we may call him "beloved of God and men," since not only was his presence "in benediction" whilst he lived amongst men, but his very memory is so still (Ecclus. xlv. 1): unlike so many other saints who are now beloved of God alone, because known as yet to God alone. For to this hour, as a threefold profession of his love for his Lord, Benedict continues to feed the

flock of the Lord with his threefold fruit (John xxi. 15-17). He feeds it by his life, he feeds it by his teaching, and he feeds it too by his intercession. Assisted continually by the prayers of so powerful an advocate, do you also, dearest brethren, render yourselves fruitful, because for this have you been "appointed, that you should go and bring forth fruit" (John xv. 16). But whence are you to go? Out of yourselves, doubtless, according to what is written, "Turn away from thine own will" (Ecclus. xviii. 30). We likewise read of the Lord that He went out as a sower to sow His seed (Luke viii. 5). Notice how we have here "his own seed" (semen suum), just as in the other text we had "his own fruit" (fructum suum). Dearest brethren, let us imitate also the example of the Saviour, because unto this did He come: that He might furnish us with a model and mark out the way.

Perhaps the Lord Himself is likewise a tree from which I ought to cut down some branches to lay before your feet? Yet why do I say "perhaps"? For He certainly is a tree and a heavenly plant, although planted in the earth, according as it is written, "Truth is sprung out of the earth, and justice hath looked down from heaven" (Ps. lxxxiv. 12). From this tree, therefore, I offer you the branch of self-abasement: that as Christ "emptied Himself" so may you learn to banish from your minds all self-conceit and to entertain only humble sentiments of yourselves. However, it is not by me but rather by the Apostle you are offered this branch; for in one of his epistles he thus addresses you: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but emptied Himself,

taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man" (Phil. ii. 5-7). Therefore, most dearly beloved, do you also empty yourselves, humble yourselves, sow yourselves, lose yourselves. Sow the "animal body" and "it shall rise a spiritual body" (1 Cor. xv. 44). Lose your lives in this world, so that you may keep them unto life eternal (Matt. x. 39; John xii. 25). Would you like to know how the Apostle, who exhorts us to this self-annihilation, practised it himself? Listen to his own words: "Whether we be transported in mind," he says, "it is to God, or whether we be sober it is to you" (2 Cor. v. 13). What, then, O holy Apostle, art thou to thyself? He might answer me in the words of the Psalmist: "I am as a broken vessel" (Ps. xxx. 13)* Oh, how wisely he loses himself who never does anything from a selfish motive, but whose every desire and intention is directed exclusively to the good pleasure of God and the profit of his brethren! On the other hand, unhappy "he that soweth in the flesh" because "of the flesh also he shall reap corruption" (Gal. vi. 8). In another inspired passage we read, "Blessed are ye that sow upon all waters" (Is. xxxii. 20). But wherefore is it said, "upon *all* waters"? Possibly in order to include those waters to which the Prophet refers in the psalm, "And let all the waters that are above the heavens praise the name of the Lord" (Ps. cxlviii. 4, 5), and by which are meant the angelic powers and the citizens of

* That is, incapable of retaining anything for himself. In the same sense it has been said very beautifully of St. Vincent de Paul that his hands were pierced like Jesus Christ's, so that everything placed in them flowed through at once to benefit his neighbour.—(Translator.)

paradise. But that by " all waters " (upon which we are encouraged to sow) are really signified all men and angels appears evident from the words of St. Paul, " We are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels and to men " (1 Cor. iv. 9).

Consequently, let us, for the benefit of men, sow good example by visible works, and for the holy angels let us sow " great joy " by secret aspirations and other such acts of piety as may be perceived by them alone : you know that there is " great joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance " (Luke xv. 10). Hence St. Paul says, " We provide good things not only before God, but also before men " (2 Cor. viii. 21). For with regard to God Himself, He already knows us perfectly. So the Apostle uses the expression, " before God " : that is, in the sight of those who are always standing before His face. For they are filled with joy whenever they behold us praying in secret, or meditating on one of the psalms, or engaged in any other similar exercise of piety. It is thus, dearest brethren, that you ought to sow, it is thus you ought to bring forth fruit. Yes, you too ought to sow, because so many others have sown before you ; you ought to bear fruit, because it is for you these others have sown. O race of Adam, what numbers have sown in thee, and what precious seed ! How miserably shalt thou perish, and how deservedly, if all that seed is lost in thee together with all the toil of the sowers ! To what destruction shalt thou be delivered up by the Divine Husbandman if thou makest Him no return after so much expenditure of labour and seed ! The whole Blessed Trinity has sown in thee ; the holy angels and the apostles have sown in thee ; the martyrs, the confessors, and

the virgins have sown in thee. God the Father sowed in thee when His heart belched forth His Good Word (Ps. xliv. 1): "for the Lord gave Goodness and our earth yielded her Fruit" (Ps. lxxxiv. 13). God the Son also sowed, for He is the Sower Who "went forth to sow His seed." The Father is nowhere said to have gone forth, but the Son tells us of Himself that He "came forth from the Father and hath come into the world" (John xvi. 28), so that He Who had been before the "Thought of peace" (Jer. xxix. 11) in the heart of His Father, was made now even "our peace" itself (Ephes. ii. 14) in the womb of His Mother. And the Holy Spirit sowed too, because He also came forth and showed Himself to the disciples under the form of "parted tongues as it were of fire" (Acts ii. 3). Thus the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity have sown Each in His turn: the Father peace from heaven, the Son truth, the Holy Spirit charity.

The good angels likewise sowed for our benefit on the day when they stood firm, whilst their faithless companions were falling around them. The proud Lucifer, now no longer the "bearer of light" but of night and darkness,—that proud spirit said, "I will sit in the mountain of the covenant. . . . I will be like the Most High" (Is. xiv. 13, 14). O most impudent and foolish! "Thousands of thousands minister to Him and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stand before Him" (Dan. vii. 10): and wilt thou presume to seat thyself? The seraphim and the cherubim are represented as standing (Is. vi. 2, Ezech. x. 3), they do not dare to sit. What special labour hast thou gone through that thou wouldst sit already? All the heavenly spirits are

" ministering spirits, sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation " (Heb. i. 14) : and wilt thou sit ? What hast thou sown that thou shouldst reap so soon ? No, no, not for thee is that honour, but " for them for whom it is prepared by the Father " (Matt. xx. 23). Wherefore dost thou envy them ? They shall sit, most certainly. Yes, those little worms of the earth shall one day sit in judgment, whilst thou not only shalt stand, but shalt stand to receive sentence from their mouth. " Know you not," says the Apostle, " that we shall judge angels ? " (1 Cor. vi. 3). Yes, of them is true what the Psalmist sings, " Going they went and wept, casting their seeds, but coming they shall come with joyfulness, carrying their sheaves " (Ps. cxxv. 6, 7). Thou, O Lucifer, desirest to possess two sheaves, the sheaf of honour and the sheaf of repose. Thou art anxious to sit and to be exalted. But " not so, O impious, not so " (Ps. i. 4). Thou shalt not reap because thou hast not sown. They that have sown labour and humility shall reap at the same time honour and repose : " for their double confusion and shame they shall receive double in their land " (Is. lxi. 7). This is what inspired the Psalmist to say to the Lord, " See my abjection and my labour " (Ps. xxiv. 18). And in the Gospel for to-day you have heard the Lord's promise to His disciples, to whom He said, " You shall sit on twelve seats judging the twelve tribes of Israel " (Matt. xix. 28). Here you have a promise of repose in the sitting, and of honour in the sitting to judge. Even the Lord Jesus Himself was unwilling to attain to this honour and this repose except through humility and labour. Therefore was He " condemned to a most shameful death "

(Wisdom ii. 20), "examined by outrages and torments" (ibid. 19), and "saturated with reproaches" (Jer., Lam. iii. 30), so that the enemy might be "clothed with confusion" (Ps. cxxxi. 18) and not only he, but with him all who follow in his footsteps and walk in his ways. It is He, O wicked one, it is He, I say, Who "shall sit upon the seat of His majesty" (Matt. xix. 28), "like the Most High" and equally most high with His Father. The holy angels, doubtless, had this in mind when, at the fall of Lucifer, they refused to take part in his apostasy, thus leaving us an example, that as they elected to serve so might we do also (John xiii. 15). But as for those who now aspire to honour whilst doing what they can to shirk labour, let them know that they are following the example of the rebel angel, who also before the time sought honour and repose; and if the thought of his sin is not enough to frighten them, at least let the remembrance of his chastisement inspire them with fear. For everything turned out contrary to his hopes and expectations, so that he has been made a butt for mockery (Ps. ciii. 26, juxta LXX), and everlasting fire has been prepared for his punishment (Matt. xxv. 41). To help us to avoid so terrible a doom, the holy angels sowed for us the virtue of prudence, of which they gave an illustrious example when so many of their brother-angels fell.

This same virtue of prudence the apostles likewise sowed for us, when, at the secession of those who followed "the wisdom of this world" which is "foolishness with God" (1 Cor. iii. 19) and the "prudence of the flesh" which worketh "death" and "is an enemy to God" (Rom. viii. 6, 7), they faithfully adhered

to the Lord. For some were scandalised to hear Him speak of the Sacrament of His Flesh and Blood "and walked no more with Him" (John vi. 67). But when the apostles were asked as to whether they also wished to go away, they answered, "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John vi. 69). Dearest brethren, let us imitate this example of prudence, because many still follow Jesus until it comes to eating His Flesh and drinking His Blood, that is to say, participating in His sufferings—such is the sense of these words and the signification of the Sacrament itself*—then they take scandal and "go back" complaining that "this saying is hard" (ibid. 61). Let us be prudent like the apostles and exclaim, "'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life'; 'we depart not from Thee, Thou shalt quicken us' (Ps. lxxix. 19); 'not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God' (Matt. iv. 4). It is not in the world alone that delight is to be found. What am I saying! No worldly delight can equal that which we taste in Thy words. Therefore hath one of Thy prophets said, 'How sweet are Thy words to my palate! more than honey to my mouth' (Ps. cxviii. 103). To whom, then, shall we go? Thou, O Lord, hast the words of eternal life, and they are more precious to us than aught that the world can give. For not only eternal life itself, but even the very promise of eternal life and 'the expectation of the just is joy' (Prov. x. 28), yea, joy so great that in comparison with it all else that the heart can desire is as nothing."

* Cf. Vol. i. of present Series, pp. 150, 151, note.—(Translator.)

In this way, therefore, the holy apostles sowed for us the seed of prudence. With respect to the martyrs, fortitude, as is clear, is the virtue sown by them. The confessors sowed the seed of that justice which they practised all their lives. Notice that there is the same difference between the martyrs and the confessors as between the Apostle Peter, who left all things at once, and the Patriarch Abraham, who expended the wealth of this world in works of piety. For whilst the former, " being made perfect in a short space, fulfilled a long time " (Wisdom iv. 13), the latter endured a life of lingering and varied martyrdoms. It is evident, finally, that the holy virgins sowed for us the seed of temperance by trampling their passions under their feet.

FIRST SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION.

" Mercy and truth have met each other, justice and peace have kissed."—Ps. lxxxiv. 11.

" That glory may dwell in our land, mercy and truth have met each other, justice and peace have kissed." " Our glory," says the great Apostle, " is this, the testimony of our conscience " (2 Cor. ii. 12). Not such testimony as the proud Pharisee obtained, for although his deceived and deceiving conscience gave testimony to him, we know that testimony was not true (Luke xviii. 11, 12, John xix. 35) ; but the testimony which " the Spirit Himself giveth to our spirit " (Rom. viii. 16)—it is in this testimony we place our glory. Now it seems to me that this divine testimony consists in three convictions. For we ought to believe, in the first place, that we cannot obtain the pardon of our sins otherwise than through the mercy of God ; secondly, that we are powerless to do any good work whatever except by His grace ; thirdly, that by no works of ours can we merit eternal life, unless it is His good pleasure to bestow upon us this also as a free gift.* " Who can make him clean that is conceived

* But how can we be said to merit what is bestowed upon us as a free gift ? In Chapter xiii. of the Saint's classic work on Grace and Free Will, we find the explanation : That which is a gift as the fruit of God's free grace is merited by our co-operation with grace ; eternal life is truly given as a reward, because it crowns our merits ; nevertheless, it is also a gratuitous gift because the merits which it crowns are themselves the fruits of God's antecedent grace : " Merita tua si bona sunt Dei dona sunt," says St. Augustine.—(Translator.)

of unclean seed" save only Him Who alone is clean? (Job xiv. 4). Undoubtedly, that which has been done can never be undone: yet if God wills not to impute it, it shall be as if it had not been. The Prophet had this in mind when he exclaimed, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord hath not imputed sin" (Ps. xxxi. 2). With regard to good works, it is absolutely certain that no one can perform them of himself. For if human nature was unable to stand, even whilst still in its integrity, how much less shall it be able, corrupted as it now is, to rise from its fall? It is manifest that all things tend of themselves to return to their origin, and are always more easily moved in that direction. So it is even with us. From nothingness we have been created, and you know, my brethren, that if left to ourselves we are constantly tending to sin, that is to say, to nothingness.*

Now, as to eternal life, we know "that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come" (Rom. viii. 18), no, not even if one man were to endure them all. For human merits are

* That is to say, the radical reason of our proneness to sin is found in our origin from nothingness. Compare this with the following from Father Rickaby: "I suggest that a world clear of all evil is an intrinsic impossibility and that the reason why God never made such a world is that it is not makable. . . . I am led to conjecture the intrinsic necessity of evil 'patrolling,' as Plato says, 'all mortal nature and this region of earth' not from any speculation on the nature and attributes of God but from the consideration of the abyss of nothingness out of which every creature is drawn. This kinship with nothingness clings to all creatures. The creature cannot put off the traces of its origin, and it is twofold. Inasmuch as it comes of God it has whatever of goodness and positive being there is in it. But inasmuch as it is drawn out of nothingness there attaches to it from the first a certain defectibility, a proneness to decay and failure—in fact, to evil" (*Oxford and Cambridge Conferences*, p. 139).—(Translator.)

not of such great worth as that therefore God is obliged in strict justice to reward them with eternal life, so that He would do us a wrong if He refused to bestow it.* Leaving aside the fact that all our merits are themselves only the gifts of God, so that even on their account man is more indebted to God than God to man: what, I ask, is all that man can merit in comparison with the glory of paradise, immense and eternal? Where shall we find a holier man than the Royal Prophet, to whom the Lord Himself rendered such excellent testimony, when He said, "I have found David, a man according to My own heart" (Acts xiii. 22)? Nevertheless, even he was obliged to say to God, "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant" (Ps. cxlii. 2). Therefore, "Let no man deceive himself" (1 Cor. iii. 18), for if one only takes the trouble to examine the matter as he ought he shall certainly find that not even "with ten thousand will he be able

* This seems at first sight to clash with the definition of the Council of Trent, Sess. 6, c. 16, can. 32: "If anyone says that the good works of a justified man are the gifts of God in such a sense that they are not also the merits of the justified man himself; or that the justified man, by the good works he performs through the grace of God and the merits of Jesus Christ of Whom he is a living member, does not truly merit an increase of grace, life eternal, and the actual attainment of life eternal —provided he dies in the grace of God—and even an increase of glory, let him be anathema." But the contradiction is only apparent. The Saint is speaking of our merits, viz., our good works, considered apart from God's free acceptance and promise of reward. Now, in the view of perhaps the majority of theologians such acceptance and promise are essential for the condign meritoriousness of even our supernatural good works proceeding from grace "God is made our debtor," writes St. Augustine, "not by receiving anything from us, but by His own promise. We say to a man: thou art in my debt because thou hast obtained of me; but to God: Thou art in my debt because Thou hast given me a promise. Thus, therefore, we can demand our due from Him, saying: 'Render what Thou hast promised, for we have done what Thou hast enjoined'" (Sermon 158).—(Translator.)

to meet Him That with twenty thousand cometh against him" (Luke xiv. 31).

But, my brethren, these truths of which I have just been speaking are by no means sufficient: they ought rather to be considered as the beginning and, as it were, the foundation of faith. If, then, thou believest that thy sins can be blotted out by Him alone against Whom alone thou hast offended (Ps. l. 6) and to Whom alone sin has no access, "thou dost well" (James ii. 19): but advance a step further and believe this likewise, that He has in effect forgiven thee thy transgressions. Such is the testimony which the Holy Spirit renders in thy heart, saying, "Thy sins are forgiven thee" (Matt. ix. 5). And so St. Paul "accounts a man to be justified freely by faith" (Rom. iii. 28). With respect to merits also, it is not enough to believe that they cannot be acquired except through the grace of God, unless the Spirit of truth testifies to thee that thou hast thus actually acquired them. Similarly, as regards eternal life, thou must have the testimony of the Spirit that thou shalt certainly attain to it by the divine assistance. For it is the Spirit Himself Who pardons our sins, it is He Who gives us our merits, and it is He also Who renders to us the reward of our merits.

My brethren, these "testimonies are become exceedingly credible" (Ps. xcii. 5). In the first place, I have in the Lord's passion the most conclusive evidence as to the pardon of my sins. For the voice of His Blood, Which has far greater force than that of the blood of Abel (Heb. xii. 24), proclaims aloud in the hearts of the elect the remission of all their offences. "He was delivered up for our sins," says the Apostle

(Rom. iv. 25), and we cannot doubt that His death has been more powerful and efficacious unto good for us than our sins have been unto evil. Next, as to good works, I possess an equally strong proof in the fact of the Lord's resurrection, for "He rose again for our justification" (ibid.). And concerning the hope of reward, I have the testimony of His ascension, because He ascended for our glorification (John xiv. 2). We find reference in the psalms to this threefold effect of divine mercy. In one place the Prophet sings, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord hath not imputed sin" (Ps. xxxi. 2), in another, "Blessed is the man whose help is from Thee" (Ps. lxxxiii. 6), and elsewhere, "Blessed is the man whom Thou hast chosen and taken to Thee: he shall dwell in Thy courts" (Ps. lxiv. 5). Here, my brethren, you have true glory, a glory that dwells within us, because it is a glory given by Him Who "dwelleth by faith in our hearts" (Ephes. iii. 17). But the children of Adam, "seeking glory one from another," had no desire for "the glory which is from God alone" (John v. 44). And thus, pursuing the glory which comes from without, they possessed glory indeed, yet not so much in themselves as in the mouths of others.

Do you desire me to tell you, brethren, whence man has this indwelling glory? I will endeavour to satisfy you in a few words, because I am anxious to proceed without further delay to a discussion of the mystical sense of my text. For it was this alone I purposed to investigate carefully in the words of the Prophet; but that apostolic utterance regarding internal glory and the testimony of conscience suggested itself at once to my mind and turned my thoughts to the con-

sideration of the moral sense.* I say, then, that this indwelling glory is found even here on this earth of ours wherever " mercy and truth have met each other, and justice and peace have kissed." For it is necessary that the preventing mercy of God be met by the truth of our confession and that thenceforth we should " follow peace and holiness, that is, justice, without which no man shall see God " (Heb. xii. 14). When a man begins to feel compunction for his sins, that is an effect of the divine mercy by which he is already prevented. But it does not enter his heart until it is met by the truth of his confession. " I have sinned against the Lord," said David to the Prophet Nathan, when rebuked by the latter for his double crime of adultery and homicide. And the Prophet replied, " The Lord also hath taken away thy sin " (2 Kings xii. 13). Yes, because " mercy and truth had now met each other." So much is necessary that we may " decline from evil " (Ps. xxxvi. 27), but to " do good " (ibid.) we must " praise the Lord in timbrel and in choir " (Ps. cl. 4), that is to say, we must have

* With St. Bernard, the moral sense of a Scriptural text signifies the practical rules of conduct derivable therefrom, whilst the mystical sense has reference to hidden truths of the speculative order. The more common way is to distinguish first between the literal sense which belongs immediately to the inspired words, and the mystical sense which is derived mediately from the words, immediately from the actions or objects signified by the words. The latter is then subdivided into the allegorical sense, which deals with what we must believe, the analogical, which concerns the objects of our hope, and the tropological or moral, which reveals to us our duties, and so has reference to charity, since " charity is the fulfilling of the law " (Rom. xiii. 10). All this is found neatly expressed in the distich :

" Litera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria,
Moralis quid agas, quo tendas anagogia."

—(Translator.)

unity and concord in bodily mortifications, in the fruits of penance, and in the works of justice—for "unity of spirit" (Ephes. iv. 3) is "the bond of perfection" (Col. iii. 14)—and must not turn aside either to the right hand or to the left. For there are some whose "right hand is the right hand of iniquity" (Ps. cxliii. 8). Such was that proud Pharisee of whom I have made mention, and who boasted that he was not as the rest of men: but, as before remarked, "he gave testimony of himself, so his testimony is not true" (John viii. 13). But securely may he glory in whomsoever "mercy and truth have met each other and justice and peace have kissed": only let him glory not in himself but in the "Spirit of truth" (John xiv. 17) Who renders testimony to him (2 Cor. x. 17).

"That glory may dwell in our land, mercy and truth have met each other, justice and peace have kissed." My brethren, if "a wise son is the glory of his father" (Prov. x. 1), since no one can be wiser than the Son of God, Who is Wisdom Itself, it evidently follows that the glory of the Eternal Father is Christ, the Power of God and the Wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i. 24). Therefore, inasmuch as "at sundry times and in divers manners" (Heb. i. 1) it was predicted of Him by the prophets that He would be seen upon earth and would converse with men (Bar. iii. 38): the Psalmist indicates in these words how that has been fulfilled, and how, all things being accomplished which were foretold of Him in the Scriptures, "Glory has dwelt in our land." It is as if he said in clear terms: "In order that the Word might be made flesh and dwell among us (John i. 14) mercy and truth have met each other, justice and peace have kissed." We have come, my

brethren, to a most profound mystery, a mystery worthy to be investigated with all diligence; but, alas! we have neither minds powerful enough to fathom it, nor, given a true understanding thereof, have we words capable of communicating our thought. However, I will offer you my own humble sentiments, such as they are, in the hope that they may at least "give an occasion to a wise man" (Prov. ix. 9). It seems to me, then, most dearly beloved, that I behold the first man, fresh from the hand of his Creator, adorned in particular with four virtues and, in the words of the Prophet, "clothed with the garments of salvation" (Is. lxi. 10). For in these four the whole of salvation consists nor can it be had without the united presence of them all: especially as they cease to be virtues if they are separated from each other. The first man, therefore, received from God the virtue of mercy as a guardian and attendant which should at once go before and follow after him, watch over and protect him everywhere. You perceive what kind of foster-parent the Lord found for His little one, what a valet He provided for newly-created man. But man, as being a noble and rational creature, had also need of a tutor, to the end that he might not be cared simply as a brute beast, but brought up as a well-beloved child. Now for this office no better master could be found than truth itself, which would sometime lead its pupil to a knowledge of the Supreme Truth. But, in the meantime, lest he should be found "wise to do evils" (Jer. iv. 22) and as "knowing to do good and not doing it, it should be sin to him" (James iv. 17), he was given justice to guide his steps. Furthermore, he received from the hand of his most beneficent Creator the addi-

tional endowment of peace for his solace and delight, a twofold peace, preventing both "combats within and fears without"* (2 Cor. vii. 5), so that neither the flesh could "lust against the spirit" (Gal. v. 17) nor could any external creature inspire him with alarm. For we are told that it was Adam who as their lord imposed what names he pleased upon all the animals Gen. ii. 19), and even the serpent itself did not dare to attack him with violence, but had recourse to cunning instead. What, then, was wanting to him who had mercy to guard him, truth to instruct him, justice to guide him, peace to console him?

But, alas! this creature so highly favoured "went down from Jerusalem to Jericho" (Luke x. 30), "unto his folly" (Ps. xxi. 3) and utter ruin. For he "fell among robbers" (ibid.) by whom, as we are told, he was first of all stripped of his clothes. Is it not manifest that he had been stripped indeed who at the coming of the Lord complained of his nakedness (Gen. iii. 10)? Neither could he be reclothed nor recover the garments of which he had been despoiled except on condition that Christ lost His own garments. For just as he was not able to regain the spiritual life of his soul save through the corporal death of Christ, in the same way he could not recover the garments taken from him until Christ was stripped of His own. And consider if it be not on account of these four virtues which made up, as its four parts, the mystical vesture lost by the first and old Adam, that the vesture of the second and new Adam was also divided into four parts (John xix. 23). Perhaps you desire me to tell you now

* "Intus pugnae, foris timores": whereas the Apostle writes: "foris pugnae, intus timores."

what in the Old Adam was typified by the "seamless coat" (ibid.) of the New, which was not divided but disposed of by lot? I am of opinion that it was the divine image: for this is nothing sewed on, but is rather implanted and impressed on our very nature, and is incapable of being either parted or rent. Man was made to God's image and likeness (Gen. i. 26), to the image of God in his powers of understanding and free-choice, to the likeness of God in his endowment of virtues. The likeness was lost by sin, "nevertheless man continueth as an image" (Ps. xxxviii. 7). For not even the fire of hell shall be able to consume, although it shall certainly cauterise this image; it shall burn yet not efface it. The image, therefore, is not divided but has its destiny decided by lot. And wherever the lot of the soul may be cast, there shall the image be too. The same is not true of the likeness: this abides in the good, but when the soul becomes guilty of sin, she at once undergoes a miserable change, losing her resemblance to her Creator and "made like to the senseless beasts" (Ps. xlviii. 13).*

But as I have stated that man was despoiled of all his four virtues, it will be well to explain in what manner he was despoiled of each. Justice was lost to him when Eve hearkened to the serpent's voice and Adam to Eve's rather than to the voice of God. There was still, however, one resource left to them which they might have availed of; and the Lord Himself suggested it to them by the examination He put them through. But they refused to take advantage of it, rather "inclining their hearts to evil words, to make excuses in

* On this subject, cf. Sermons LXXX., LXXXI., LXXXII., on the Canticle of Canticles.

sins" (Ps. xl. 4). For it is the first requirement of justice that we should abstain from sin, and the second that we should atone for sin committed by adequate penance. Mercy, also was lost by both our first parents: by Eve, when she began to burn with so fierce a fire of concupiscence that she spared neither herself, nor her husband, nor her offspring to be, but doomed all alike to the chastisement of a terrible curse and inevitable death; and by Adam, when he exposed to the divine anger the woman for whose sake he had sinned, as if hoping to escape the arrow of justice by hiding behind her back. "The woman saw that the tree was good to eat, and fair to the eyes, and delightful to behold" (Gen. iii. 6); besides, she was told by the serpent that by eating they, to wit, she and her husband, should be as gods (ibid. 5). Here we have a threefold cord of curiosity, pleasure, and vanity: and "a threefold cord is not easily broken" (Eccles. iv. 12). Such things alone the world has to offer: "the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John ii. 16). It was by these our cruel mother was "drawn away and allured" (James i. 14) so as to renounce every instinct of mercy. Thus also Adam, who had felt for the woman such a vicious compassion as to be willing to sin with her, refused her afterwards such a virtuous compassion as to be willing to endure the penalty for her.

The woman again was despoiled of truth, first by culpably distorting the divine words of warning, "Thou shalt die the death" (Gen. ii. 17) to this, "Lest *perhaps* we die" (Gen. iii. 3); secondly by giving credit to the serpent, which flatly contradicted what she had been told by God, saying, "No, you shall not die the death"

(ibid. 4). Adam, in his turn, was also despoiled of truth when he was ashamed to confess it, and resorted to the shelter of sewed fig-leaves, that is, to the covert of vain excuses. For Truth has said, " He that shall be ashamed of Me before men, I will also be ashamed of him before My Father Who is in heaven " (Luke ix. 26, Matt. x. 33). Peace, finally, was lost, because " there is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord " (Is. xlviii. 22). For is it not manifest that they who began now to blush for their nakedness had found, like St. Paul, " an opposing law in their members " (Rom. vii. 23) ? " I was afraid," said Adam, " because I was naked " (Gen. iii. 10). Thou hadst no such fear, O wretched one, thou hadst no such fear heretofore ; neither didst thou require any sewed fig-leaves, although thy body was as naked then as it is now.

It was then—to pursue the parable of the Prophet, who represents Mercy and Truth as meeting each other and Justice and Peace as embracing—it was then, I say, that there appears to have arisen a violent contention between these virtues. For whereas Justice and Truth began to punish miserable man, Peace and Mercy, not having so much zeal for the law as their sister virtues, judged that he ought rather to be spared : as you know, the latter two virtues are bound together in a specially intimate relation, as are also indeed the two former. Hence it happened that, as the one pair continued to wreak vengeance and to scourge the unfortunate transgressor on every side, adding to present afflictions the threat of future chastisement ; the other withdrew into the heart of the Heavenly Father, " returning to God Who gave them " (Eccles. xii. 7). For He alone was thinking " thoughts of peace " (Jer.

xxix. 11) when all beside seemed to be full of affliction. Peace gave Him no rest and Mercy "gave Him no silence" (Is. lxii. 7), but with their pious murmurs they both kept knocking at His heart of a Father, whispering, "Will God then cast off for ever? Or will He never be more favourable again? Or will God forget to shew mercy? Or will He in anger shut up His mercies?" (Ps. lxxvi. 8-10). And although the "Father of mercies" (2 Cor. i. 3) seemed to dissemble for long, in order to satisfy the zeal of Justice and Truth, not in vain nevertheless was the importunity of the supplicants, for their prayer was heard "in a seasonable time" (Ps. xxxi. 6).

Perhaps we may suppose their petition to have received some such answer as follows: "How long will you continue to importune Me thus? Know you not that 'I am a debtor' (Rom. i. 14) to your sisters also, whom you behold ready girded 'to execute vengeance upon the nations' (Ps. cxlix. 7)? Let them be called, let Truth and Justice come, so that We may consult together about this matter." The heavenly envoys, accordingly, set out in haste; but when they saw the misery of men and the cruel affliction under which they groaned, as the Prophet says, "the angels of peace wept bitterly" (Is. xxxiii. 7). For who ever either sought or "prayed for the things that are for peace" (Ps. cxxi. 6) more faithfully than "the angels of peace"? Well, let us suppose that after conferring with her sister Justice, Truth ascended on the appointed day, ascended even to the clouds, not yet with her native brightness fully restored, but looking still somewhat dimmed and darkened, the effect of her indignant zeal. Then was fulfilled what we read in the Prophet:

"O Lord, Thy mercy is in heaven, and Thy truth mounteth even to the clouds" (Ps. xxxv. 6). Between the litigants sat "the Father of lights" (James i. 17), and each proceeded to support her claim with the strongest arguments she could discover. My brethren, do you think there is anyone who deserved to witness that debate and who would be willing to tell us all that happened? Is there anyone who heard what words were spoken and will consent at our request to repeat them? But perhaps they were "unspeakable words" (Ecclus. xxxvi. 16) "which it is not granted to man to utter" (2 Cor. xii. 4). I will suppose, however, that the controversy, in effect, was something like this: "Thy rational creature," began Mercy, "is in sore need of compassion, because he is overwhelmed with misery and his state very pitiful. 'It is time to have mercy on him, for the time is come' (Ps. ci. 14), yea, the time is already past." To which Truth responded, "Rather is it necessary that Thou, O Lord, shouldst fulfil the word Thou hast spoken. It is necessary that the whole of Adam should die, with all those contained in him on the day when in his disobedience he tasted the forbidden fruit." "But wherefore, then, O my Father," cried Mercy, "wherefore hast Thou begotten me if I am destined to perish so soon? For, as Truth herself knows well, Thy mercy has died and is no more if Thou refusest ever to show compassion." "And who does not know," argued Truth in her turn, "that if this transgressor escapes the sentence of death pronounced against him, Thy truth, O Lord, will have perished, instead of enduring for ever (Ps. cxvi. 2)?"

But hereupon one of the cherubim suggested that the

disputants be referred to King Solomon,* "since," as he said, "all judgment hath been given to the Son" (John v. 22). Accordingly, "Mercy and Truth met each other" in the sight of Solomon, with the same demands and arguments as I have just rehearsed for you. "I acknowledge," said Truth, "that Mercy has good zeal but I could wish it were more 'according to knowledge' (Rom. x. 2). For why does she judge now that a rebel ought to be spared rather than her own sister?" "But thou thyself wouldst spare neither the rebel nor thy sister," answered Mercy, "for thou burnest with such indignation against him that thou wouldst involve me in his destruction. What evil have I done to deserve this? If thou hast any grievance against me, let me know what it is, but if thou hast not, wherefore am I so persecuted?"

A most momentous controversy this, my brethren, and one extremely difficult to decide. Who, witnessing it, would not have cried out, "It were better for us if this man had not been born" (Matt. xxvi. 24)? Yes, most dearly beloved, such was the impasse arrived at. It seemed impossible to find any way of satisfying the clashing claims of Mercy and Truth with regard to man. But when Truth added that any injury done to her own interests would redound upon the Judge Himself, and that it was necessary at all hazards to safeguard the honour of the Father's word, lest any circumstance should prevent the accomplishment of that word "living and effectual" (Heb. iv. 12): "Desist, I pray thee," interposed Peace, "desist from such

* Solomon, whose very name signifies "the Peaceable One," is often taken as a type of Christ, the Prince of peace.—Translator.)

language: disputing like this is not becoming in us: there ought to be no discord amongst the virtues."

At this, the Judge, "bowing Himself down, wrote with His finger on the earth" (John viii. 6). And the words of His writing—which Peace who sat next Him read in the hearing of all—were these: "The one says: I am undone if Adam does not die; the other: I am undone unless he obtains mercy. Therefore, let him die a blissful death and each will have her desire." All are filled with wonder at these words of wisdom and at the manner in which the dispute has been composed and decided. For it is manifest that there is no longer cause for complaint, since the demands of both litigants can now be fully satisfied the one having an assurance that the sinner shall die, and the other that he shall obtain mercy. "But how shall this be done (Luke i. 34)?" they asked. "Death is most cruel and bitter, death is terrible: its very name is enough to inspire one with horror. How then can there be such a thing as a blissful death?" To which the Judge replied: "It is indeed true that 'the death of the wicked is very evil' (Ps. xxxiii. 22), but 'the death of the saints' can become 'precious in the sight of the Lord' (Ps. cxv. 6). Will death not appear precious if it becomes the portal of life, the gate of glory?" "Yes, undoubtedly" they at once agreed, "but how shall this be done?" "Only in one way is it possible," He answered, "and that is: if someone on whom death has no claim will consent to die, out of charity. For death shall not have power to detain the innocent, but, as it is written, a hole shall be bored through the jaw of Leviathan (Job xl. 21), and the middle wall of partition shall be broken down' (Ephes.

ii. 14), and ' the great chaos that is fixed ' (Luke xvi. 26) between life and death shall be bridged over. I mean, if charity, which is ' strong as death ' (Cant. viii. 6), yea, stronger than death, shall ' enter into the house of that strong man,' she shall ' bind ' him and ' rob him of his goods ' (Mark iii. 27), and not only that, but by her very passage she shall make a way through the depths of the sea by which the captives may pass forth to freedom."

This verdict seemed good and right " and worthy of all acceptation " (1 Tim. i. 15). But where was to be found that innocent one who should be willing to suffer death, not from any kind of necessity, but from choice, not because he deserved to die, but because he chose to die ? Truth " went round about the earth " (Job i. 7), but her search was vain : for no man is free from stain, not even the infant that has lived one day upon the earth (Job xiv. 4, 5, juxta LXX). Mercy in her turn searched through the whole of heaven, yet found even in the angels—I do not say wickedness (Job iv. 18) —but not enough of charity. For this triumph of charity was of right reserved to Him than Whom no one could have greater charity (John xv. 13) : that He might lay down His life for His unworthy and " unprofitable servants " (Luke xvii. 10). He does not indeed call us His servants now but His friends (John xv. 15) ; that, however, is because of His unspeakable love and amazing condescension. As for ourselves, even though we had " done all the things that are commanded us," what else ought we to say but that " we are unprofitable servants " ? But who would venture to ask of Him so great a sacrifice ? Accordingly, on the appointed day, Truth and Mercy returned, both

exceedingly anxious, because they had failed to find what they had been seeking.

Then Peace, addressing the disappointed sisters, as it were apart, consoled them with the words: "'You know nothing, neither do you consider' (John xi. 49, 50). that 'there is none—amongst creatures—that can do us this good turn, no, not one' (Ps. xiii. 1). Let Him Who gave the counsel assist us now to carry it out." The King understood what was insinuated and said: "'It repenteth Me that I have made man.' That is, the penalty belongs to Me,* it is necesssary for Me to suffer the penalty, to do penance for man because it is I Who have created him." Then He added: "'Behold I come' (Ps. xxxix. 8), for 'this chalice cannot pass away but I must drink it' (Matt. xxvi. 42)." So, summoning Gabriel, He gave him the command: "Go, say to the 'daughter of Sion: behold thy King cometh' (Zach. ix. 9)." Away sped the Archangel, and, arriving on earth, announced the glad tidings, saying, "Adorn thy marriage-couch, O Sion, and prepare to receive thy King" Before the King came Truth and Mercy, according to what is written, "Mercy and Truth shall go before Thy face" (Ps. lxxxviii. 15). It belonged to Justice to make ready the throne, as is said in the Psalm, "Justice and judgment are the preparation of Thy throne" (ibid.). As for Peace, she came down in company with the King, "that His prophets might be found faithful" (Ecclus. xxxvi. 18), who had predicted that there would be peace on our earth at His coming. Hence, at the birth of the Lord the choir of angels sang, "Peace on earth to men of good will" (Luke

* The Saint considers "poenitet me" as equivalent to poena tenet me."—(Translator.)

ii. 14). It was then also that Justice and Peace, hitherto, as it seemed, not a little at variance, lovingly embraced each other. For " the justice which was of the law " (Rom. x. 5)—if indeed it deserved the name of justice —was more accustomed to condemn than to caress, rather urging by fear than leading by love. Neither did it ever reconcile itself to peace as has now been done by " the justice which is of faith " (ibid. 6). For how was it that neither Abraham, nor Moses, nor the other just men of the Old Dispensation were able after death to attain to the peace of eternal beatitude, or to enter the kingdom of peace, if not because Justice and Peace had not yet embraced? For ourselves, dearest brethren, we ought henceforth to pursue justice with more ardent zeal, since now " Justice and Peace have kissed " and have formed an alliance of everlasting friendship; so that whoever bears with him from this life the testimony of ustic e shall be welcomed by Peace with smiling face and open arms, and " in the self-same shall sleep and rest " (Ps. iv. 9). Amen.

SECOND SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION.

"And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him: the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and of piety, and He shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord."—Is. xi. 2, 3.

Brethren, to-day when we are keeping the solemnity of the Lord's annunciation, the simple history of our redemption presents itself to our view as an immense plain of most pleasing aspect. The Archangel Gabriel is charged with a new embassy, the Virgin Mary reveals to the world a new virtue and is honoured by the heavenly envoy with a new form of salutation. The ancient curse pronounced upon women (Gen. iii. 16) is now cancelled, and the new Mother receives a new benediction. She who never felt the fire of concupiscence is filled with heavenly grace: so that by the power and operation of the Holy Ghost descending upon her, she, who knows not man, may conceive in her womb the Son of the Most High God. The remedy for our ruin enters us by the same channel through which was infused the serpent's poison which corrupted the whole human race. Innumerable flowers of this kind could be gathered without labour in these pleasant fields: but it is the central abyss of awful profundity that now attracts my gaze. Truly, the mystery of the Lord's incarnation is an inscrutable abyss; an unfathomable gulf of significance yawns beneath that sentence of the Evangelist, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us" (John i. 14)

For who is able to penetrate it? or to sound it? or to understand it? "The well is deep and I have nothing wherein to draw" (John iv. 11). But I remember that the canvas which people sometimes use to cover the mouth of the well, is wont to be moistened by the vapour exhaling from the water. Therefore, although (conscious of my infirmity) I do not dare to plunge in, I often nevertheless "stretch forth my hands to Thee, O Lord," over the mouth of this darksome deep, because "my soul is as earth without water unto Thee" (Ps. cxlii. 6). And now, dearest brethren, whatever little moisture my weak thought has been able to absorb from the vapour uprising out of this well of mystery, I will endeavour to communicate to you ungrudgingly: I will wring the cloth so as to extract from it if possible even a few drops of the celestial dew.

And first of all, I inquire the reason why it was the Son Who became incarnate rather than the Father or the Holy Ghost, since the three Divine Persons are not alone coequal in glory and majesty but in Substance are one and the same. But "who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counsellor?" (Rom. xi. 34). My brethren, we are face to face with a most profound mystery upon which it would be irreverent to pronounce an opinion too lightly. It appears to me, nevertheless, that the incarnation of either the Father or the Holy Ghost would necessarily involve the confusion of a plurality of sonships, since one Person would be called the Son of God and a different the Son of man. It seems also specially appropriate that that Person in particular should become a Son in time

Who was already a Son from eternity, lest otherwise we should have ambiguity in the name. Besides, it is the singular glory of our Virgin, it is Mary's grandest prerogative that she has merited to have one and the same Son in common with God the Father, which prerogative, as is evident, would be lost to her had any other Person but the Second become incarnate. And with regard to ourselves finally, we should not have the same grounds for our hope of salvation and of the inheritance from the incarnation of either the First Person or the Third. We are confident that He Who was the Only-Begotten, being made now "the First-Born amongst many brethren" (Rom. viii. 27) will admit to participate in the inheritance those whom He has called to share in His sonship: for if brothers, "joint-heirs also" (ibid. 17).*

As Christ Jesus, therefore, our faithful Mediator, in an ineffable mystery united together in His own single Person the Substance of God and that of man: so, in the act of reconciliation, following a counsel of infinite wisdom, did He observe perfect equity between the Creator and the creature, assigning to each what was due to each, honour to the Former, mercy to the latter. For this was the most admirable manner of effecting a reconciliation between the offended Lord and His guilty servant: that zeal for the Lord's honour should not be allowed to crush the servant with too severe a chastisement, nor, on the other hand, should that honour suffer prejudice by excessive condescension to the sinner. Hear, then, and ponder carefully the division made by the angels at the very birth of this Mediator. "Glory to God in the highest," so they

* Cf. Vol. i. of this Series, p. 6, note.

sang, " and on earth peace to men of good will " (Luke ii. 14). And furthermore, it was that He might observe the same distinction of equity that Christ, our faithful Conciliator, was never without the spirit of holy fear whereby He always showed reverence and deference to His Father, and always sought His glory, or the spirit of piety, by which He tenderly compassionated men. Therefore He had need also of the spirit of knowledge, lest without it fear and piety should be confounded in their functions. Note here that the first sin committed by our first parents had three authors, and that each of them lacked a different one of the three virtues aforesaid. The three authors of the sin were Eve, the devil, and Adam. Now it is manifest that Eve lacked knowledge, since, as the Apostle says, " the woman, being seduced, was in the transgression " (1 Tim. ii. 14). The serpent indeed had knowledge enough, for he is represented as being " more subtle than any of the beasts of the earth " (Gen. iii. 1) ; yet that malignant one was without piety, being " a murderer from the beginning " (John viii. 44). As for Adam, it may perhaps be allowed that he possessed piety, inasmuch as he was unwilling to sadden the woman, but he certainly forsook the fear of the Lord by hearkening to her voice rather than to His. Would to God it were the fear of the Lord that prevailed in him, just as it is significantly said of Christ that " He shall be filled with the spirit—not of piety, but—of the fear of the Lord " (Is. xi. 3) ! For in all things and always the fear of the Lord should take precedence of piety towards our neighbour, and it is that alone which has a right to claim possession of the whole man. It was by means of these three virtues,

therefore, fear, piety, and knowledge, that our Mediator reconciled man to God, as it was by counsel and fortitude that He delivered him from the hand of the enemy. For by counsel He deprived the devil of his ancient power over the human race, by allowing him to lay hands on the Innocent; and by fortitude He prevented him from forcibly retaining the redeemed when, arising victorious from the dead, He raised up together with Himself the life of us all.

From that time, my brethren, "He has fed us with the bread of life and understanding, and given us the water of wholesome wisdom to drink" (Ecclus. xv. 3). For the understanding of spiritual and invisible things is the true bread of the soul, the bread that "strengtheneth man's heart" (Ps. ciii. 15), and fortifies it for every good work and every spiritual exercise. "But the carnal man who perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God, for it is foolishness to him" (1 Cor. ii. 14),—let him weep and lament, saying, "My heart is withered because I forgot to eat my bread" (Ps. ci. 5). Thus, it is an evident and absolute truth that it shall profit a man nothing "if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul" (Mark viii. 36). But when could an avaricious man be brought to understand it? Thou wouldst only lose thy labour didst thou attempt to bring it home to him. And wherefore this? Simply because he judges it to be foolishness. Again, what is more true than that Christ's yoke is sweet? (Matt. xi. 30). But offer this truth to a man of the world, and see if he does not think thou art reaching him a stone instead of bread (Matt. vii. 9). Nevertheless, it cannot be doubted that it is by the understanding of such interior truths the soul properly

lives, and that that is her spiritual food: for "not in (material) bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God" (Deut. viii. 3, Matt. iv. 4). Certain as this is, it is equally certain that until thou hast acquired a relish for truth, it cannot without much difficulty gain admission to thy soul. But when thou beginnest to feel a delight in it, it is no longer food for thee: it has become drink, and flows easily into thy mind, so that "the water of wholesome wisdom" may help to digest "the bread of understanding," which would be rather a burden than a benefit to the members of the interior man, if they suffered from the lack of this moisture.

Therefore, my brethren, of all that was required for the salvation of His people, nothing whatever was wanting to the Saviour. For He it is of Whom the Prophet Isaias foretold: "And there shall come forth a Rod out of the Root of Jesse, and a Flower shall rise up out of his root. And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him: the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and of piety, and He shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord" (Is. xi. 1-3). Note well how the Prophet said that the Flower was to rise up out of the *root*, not out of the *rod*. But, as is obvious, if the Flesh of the Infant Christ had been newly created in the Virgin's womb, and was not derived from her substance, as some have maintained, the Flower should have been represented as arising not from the *root*, but rather from the *rod*. Consequently the fact that this Flower is declared to have arisen from the root proves beyond the possibility of a doubt the common origin of the matter

composing It. In remarking that the Spirit *rested* upon the Flower, the Prophet desires to insinuate that the Spirit of God found nothing to contradict Him in the Flesh of Christ. As for ourselves, the Spirit does not yet rest in us, because He is not yet completely Master of our hearts: there still "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh" (Gal. v. 17). From this domestic strife may He deliver us in Whom nothing such existed, the New Man and the True Man, Who took His true and common Flesh from the common source, yet without any of the leaven of concupiscence.

THIRD SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION.

" The law was given by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."—John i. 17.

How rich Thou art in Thy mercy, O Lord our God! How magnificent in Thy justice! How prodigal of Thy grace! Verily, " there is none like unto Thee " (Ps. lxxxv. 8), most munificent Benefactor, most equitable Recompenser, most loving-kind Deliverer. By Thy grace Thou hast regard to the humble (Ps. cxii. 6, Luke i. 48); by Thy justice Thou judgest the innocent; by Thy mercy Thou savest even the sinful. Such thoughts, dearest brethren, are the mystical meats set before us on the table of our wealthy Host by the testimonies of the Sacred Scriptures (Prov. xxiii. 1), and to-day in greater abundance than usual, as you shall find if you " consider diligently." We owe this unwonted profusion to the circumstance that in the present year the most solemn feast of the Lord's Annunciation falls within the holy season of Lent.* To-day, then, we have heard recited for us the story of the woman taken in adultery and absolved from her sin through the mercy of the Redeemer. To-day we have seen Him, the same indulgent Redeemer, delivering the innocent Susanna from death, and filling the most

* This sermon was preached in 1150, in which year the Feast of the Annunciation fell upon the Saturday preceding the Fourth Sunday of Lent. On that day the history of Susanna is recounted in the Office, whilst the story of the adulterous woman is read in the Gospel of the Mass.—(Translator.)

blessed Virgin with singular gifts of His gratuitous grace. Here in truth is a rich banquet, where we have served up to us at the same time mercy, grace, and justice. Is not mercy rightly regarded as the food of men? Yea, it is a most wholesome food and very efficacious as a remedy. Is not justice, again, the bread of the heart? Undoubtedly, and a kind of bread that wonderfully "strengtheneth the heart of man" (Ps. ciii. 15), because it is so solid and nourishing. Hence it is said, "Blessed are they that hunger after justice, for they shall have their fill" (Matt. v. 6). And with regard to the grace of God, may not this also be described as the food of the soul? Oh, certainly, and a most agreeable food it is, "having in it all that is delicious and the sweetness of every taste" (Wisdom xvi. 20): what is more, it unites in itself the properties of the preceding two, for not alone is it pleasant, but it is also nourishing and medicinal.

Let us, therefore, approach this table and let us taste somewhat of each of these dishes. "Moses in the law commanded us to stone such a one" (John viii. 5), so said sinners of a sinner, the proud Pharisees of the adulterous woman. But, O Pharisees, you were answered "according to the hardness of your heart" (Matt. xix. 8). "Jesus bowing Himself down wrote with His finger on the earth" (John viii. 6). "Lord, bow down Thy heavens and descend" (Ps. cxliii. 5). "Bowing Himself down," and inclining towards mercy —for in the Heart of Jesus is no Judaical stiffness— He "wrote with His finger—not this time on a stone, but—on the earth." And that not once only, but a second time: He wrote twice according to the number of inscribed tables given to Moses. Perhaps we may

be allowed to suppose that by the first and second writings He impressed on the earth truth and grace, respectively, according to the testimony of the Apostle John, "The law was given by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John i. 17). And consider further whether He may not be supposed to have read from the first table of truth His refutation of the Pharisees: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John viii. 7). A "short word" (Rom. ix. 28) indeed, but "living and effectual and more piercing than any two-edged sword" (Heb. iv. 12). For the blush of confusion that mantled their faces and their stealthy withdrawal showed with what power this word of the Lord had pierced the stony hearts of the accusers, with what force their flinty foreheads had been broken by this little stone (1 Kings xvii. 49). The adulterous woman deserved stoning, indeed, but let him be forward to punish her who is not conscious of deserving the like punishment himself: let him presume to wreak vengeance on the guilty, whose conscience acquits him of similar guilt. But as for him who cannot pretend to such innocence, his zeal ought to begin with himself as with the object most within reach. Let him first pronounce and execute sentence upon the domestic criminal. So far the table of truth.

But truth is not sufficient. It has confounded the accusers, yet without absolving the accused. Therefore, let the Lord Jesus write again, let Him write the table of grace; let Him read it for us also, and let us, dearest brethren, be attentive. "Woman, hath no man condemned thee? Who said: No man, Lord. And Jesus said: Neither will I condemn thee. Go, and now

sin no more" (John viii. 10, 11). O voice of mercy! O words that give to our hearing the joy of salvation! (Ps. l. 10, 14). Lord Jesus, "cause me to hear Thy mercy in the morning, for in Thee have I hoped" (Ps. cxlii. 8). For it is hope alone that can move Thee to compassion; it is only into the vessel of faithful confidence that Thou pourest the oil of Thy mercy. There is indeed a perfidious confidence which merits nothing but maledictions: it is that which we possess when we sin in hope. Although properly speaking it should not be called confidence at all, but rather insensibility or pernicious dissimulation. For how can he have any real confidence who attends not to the danger that surrounds him? Or how can he who feels no fear and recognises no object of fear possess that which is the remedy for fear? Confidence is a source of consolation. But they need no consolation "who are glad when they have done evil, and rejoice in most wicked things" (Prov. ii. 14). Consequently, my brethren, let us, like holy Job, ask the Lord to make known to us "how many are our iniquities and sins," and to reveal to us "our crimes and offences" (Job xiii. 23). "Let us examine our ways and our works" (Jer. xviii. 11, Lam. iii. 40), and ponder in diligent consideration all the perils that encompass us. Let each one of us cry out in the midst of his fears, "I shall go to the gates of hell" (Is. xxxviii. 10); so that henceforward the mercy of God shall be our only comfort. For this is true and perfect hope, when a man despairs of himself and leans with his whole weight upon God. This, I say, is true confidence, to which mercy is never denied, since, as the Psalmist testifies, "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him,

and in them that hope in His mercy" (Ps. cxlvi. 11). And surely we have good cause for fear when we consider ourselves, and equally good reason for confidence when we turn our gaze towards God. For He is " sweet and mild and plenteous in mercy " (Ps. lxxxv. 5), " ready to repent of the evil " (Joel ii. 13), and " bountiful to forgive " (Is. lv. 7). Let us at least credit His enemies who could find in Him nothing else that might be made a ground of accusation except His readiness to condone. " He will compassionate this sinner," they said among themselves, " and when she is denounced to Him He will not suffer her to be slain. He will, therefore, stand convicted of openly contravening the law by pardoning one whom the law condemns." But, O Pharisees, all your malicious devising has but redounded to your own disadvantage. By fleeing from judgment you show that you despair of your cause ; whilst the guilty woman, having none to accuse her, can now receive pardon without injury to the law.

But let us consider now, most dearly beloved, in what manner the Pharisees stole away from the scene of judgment. " They went out one by one, beginning with the eldest " (John viii. 9). Do you not see how the two elders go to hide themselves in the orchard of Joakim ? They seek his wife, the virtuous Susanna. Let us follow them, for their minds are full of evil purpose against her. " Consent to us " (Dan. xiii. 20) say these elders, these Pharisees, these wolves, who only just now have been prevented from devouring another poor sheep, albeit a wanderer from the fold. " Consent to us and do as we desire." " O ye that are grown old in evil days " (ibid. 52), do you now persuade one to commit the same crime of which you

awhile since accused another? But this is all your justice; you do in secret the very things which you publicly denounce in your neighbour. Therefore it was that you "went out one by one" when He Who knows all secrets struck home to your consciences so powerfully with the words, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." With good reason, then, did Truth say to His disciples, "Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. v. 20). "But if thou wilt not consent to us," say these elders, "we will bear witness against thee" (Dan. xiii. 21). O seed of Chanaan and not of Juda! Moses certainly has not commanded you this in the law. Perhaps you pretend that he requires you not only to stone the adulterous but also to accuse the virtuous? to bear false witness against the innocent as well as to hurl stones at the guilty? But so far is this from being the case that he does not allow the false accuser any more than the adulterer to go unpunished (Deut. xix. 16-19). The truth is that "you who make your boast of the law, by transgression of the law dishonour God" (Rom. ii. 23).

"Susanna sighed and said: I am straitened on every side" (Dan. xiii. 22). Yes, because whichever way she turned she saw death confronting her: here, bodily death; there, the death of the soul. "If I do this thing," she went on, "it is death to me, and if I do it not, I shall not escape your hands" (ibid.). So it is, O Pharisees. Neither the virtuous nor the vicious can escape your hands, neither the sinner nor the saint is secure from your accusations. You dissemble the sins you have yourselves committed when you find

sins with others; but if you chance to meet someone who has not been guilty of any sin, you impute to him your own. But what course does Susanna take, "straitened on every side," as she is, and forced to choose between death and death, that is, between corporal and spiritual death? "It is better for me," she says, "to fall into your hands without doing it, than to sin in the sight of the Lord" (ibid.). For she knew that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God" (Heb. x. 31). Men indeed can "kill the body, but after that have nothing more that they can do": not them, consequently, ought we to fear but rather "Him Who after He hath killed, hath power to cast both body and soul into hell" (Luke xii. 4, 5; Matt. x. 28). What keeps the servants of Joakim from coming? Let them rush in by the postern, for there is an uproar in the orchard, the yelping of two old wolves and between them the bleating of a poor frightened little sheep. But the Lord, Who has so mercifully snatched from their very jaws one little deserving to be rescued, will not now suffer them to devour the innocent. With reason, therefore, when about to be put to death, "her heart had confidence in the Lord" (Dan. xiii. 35) Whom hitherto she had so much feared as to despise in comparison all human fear, Whose law she had preferred to both life and reputation. "For never had there been any such word said of Susanna," whose "parents were just" and whose "husband was the most honourable of all the Jews" (ibid. xxvii. 3, 4). And with good reason also was she, who hungered so eagerly after justice that, for its sake, she had been willing to endure corporal death and the disgrace of her house, and to witness the inconsolable sorrow of her

friends: with good reason, I say, was she allowed to behold her unjust persecutors condemned to receive well-merited chastisement by the sentence of a righteous judge.

And for ourselves, dearest brethren, if we desire to hear from the Lord the consoling sentence, "Neither will I condemn thee," if we wish now to sin no more against Him, if we "would live godly in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. iii. 12): we also must "suffer persecution" (ibid.) and that without "rendering evil for evil or railing for railing" (1 Peter iii. 9). For he who is not patient shall lose justice, that is to say, shall lose life, that is to say, shall lose his soul (Luke xxi. 19). "Revenge to Me, and I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom. xii. 19). So in truth it is. He will undoubtedly repay thy persecutors, provided only that thou leavest revenge to Him, provided thou usurpest not His right of judgment, provided thou requitest not with evil them that render evil to thee (Ps. vii. 5). He "executeth judgment" indeed, yet only "for them that suffer wrong" (Ps. cxlv. 7); "He shall reprove with equity—but only—for the meek of the earth" (Is. xi. 4). But I fear you are growing impatient that the sweetmeats are so long delayed. You should not, however, be surprised at this, because they are truly sweetmeats. No matter how full you may be already, you will find them no burden. Yea, even though eructating from satiety, you will nevertheless find a relish in these.

"The angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee called Nazareth" (Luke i. 26). Art thou surprised, my brother, to see so small a town so highly honoured as to receive an envoy, and so noble an

envoy, from so great a King? But know that in that little town is concealed an immense treasure—concealed, I say, but only concealed from men, not also from God. What is Mary but the treasury of God? Yes, and wherever she is, there is His heart also (Matt. vi. 21). His eyes are always upon her, and He never ceases to "regard the humility of His handmaid" (Luke i. 48). It will be allowed, I suppose, that the Only-Begotten of God the Father knows heaven. And if He knows heaven, He must likewise know Nazareth. How can He help knowing His native place? How can He help knowing His inheritance? For He has inherited Nazareth from His Mother, as heaven from His Father: hence He testifies of Himself that He is both the Son and the Lord of David (Matt. xxii. 44,45). "The heaven of heaven to the Lord," sings the Psalmist, "but the earth He hath given to the children of men" (Ps. cxiii. 16). The Lord Jesus, consequently, has a just title to the possession of both heaven and earth: of heaven, because He is Lord, and of earth, because He is the Son of man. And hear how, as the Son of man, He even claims the earth for His own, and yet shares it with us as the Bridegroom of our souls: "The flowers," He says, "have appeared in our land" (Cant. ii. 12). There is a particular appropriateness in the fact that His native town was called Nazareth, which signifies "a flower." For the Flower from the "root of Jesse" (Is. xi. 1) loves the flower-bearing land: He Who calls Himself "the Flower of the field and the Lily of the valleys" (Cant. ii. 1) is delighted to "feed among the lilies" (ibid. 16). Flowers are valued for three things, viz., beauty of colour, sweetness of fragrance, and the prospect of fruit: these

may be called their threefold grace. Such a flower shalt thou, my brother, be esteemed by God, and He will be well pleased in thee (Matt. iii. 17), if He discovers in thee the beauty of a virtuous life, and the sweet fragrance of a good reputation, and the hope and desire of a future reward. For eternal life is the fruit of the Spirit.

" Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God " (Luke i. 30). How much grace ? Full grace and singular grace. But is it singular I ought to say and not rather general ? To be exact, it is both singular and general, because it is full, and the more singular in proportion as it is also general. For she has been endowed with general grace in a singular degree and manner. Her grace, I say, is all the more singular for that it is at the same time general, because by her alone amongst all has grace been found. It is singular, because thou alone, O Mary, hast found grace in its fulness ; and it is general, because of this " fulness we have all received " (John i. 10). " Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb " (Luke i. 42). Yes, it is no doubt in a singular manner the fruit of thy womb, but through thee it has come into the hearts of us all. It was thus of old, it was thus, I say, in the case of Gedeon : the whole of the dew was in the fleece and the whole of it on the floor, yet it was not all in any one part of the floor as it was all in the fleece (Judges vi. 37-40). So in thee alone has the wealthy, yea, boundlessly rich Lord of heaven " emptied Himself " (Phil. ii. 7), in thee alone has the Most High humbled Himself, in thee alone has the Immense circumscribed Himself, becoming " a little less than the angels " (Heb. ii. 9), in thee alone,

finally, has the Son of God, Himself true God, made Himself also the Son of Man. But to what end? To the end that we might be enriched by His poverty, exalted by His lowliness, magnified by His littleness, and that "gained to the Lord" by His incarnation, we might be made "one spirit with Him" (1 Cor. vi. 17).

But what shall I say, brethren? Into what manner of vessel in particular does God pour His grace? If, as already remarked, confidence has capacity to receive mercy, and patience is receptive of justice: what kind of vessel can we pronounce to be a proper receptacle for grace? Grace is the purest of balsams and requires a vessel of the utmost solidity. Now what is purer, what more solid than humility of heart? Rightly, therefore, does God give His grace to the humble (James iv. 6), rightly "hath He regarded the humility of His handmaid." By what right, do you ask? Because the humble soul is occupied by no human merit, so that the fulness of divine grace can freely flow into her. But to this humility we have to mount by certain steps. For at first, whilst a man still takes delight in sin and has not yet broken off the miserable habit by the purpose to amend, his heart is rendered by its own vices altogether incapable of receiving grace; afterwards, also, when he has resolved to reform his conduct, to renounce for ever his old habits, the sins of his past, although they appear to be in a manner pruned as the effect of this resolution, impede, nevertheless, the inflow of grace, so long as they are allowed to abide in the soul. They abide until they are washed out by confession, until by subsequent "fruits worthy of penance" (Matt. iii. 8) they are fully atoned for. But

woe to thee if to thy former sins and vices there succeeds the more pernicious vice of ingratitude! For what is so evidently opposed to grace? The fervour of our conversion is lost little by little in course of time, our charity is gradually cooled whilst iniquity abounds (Matt. xxiv. 12), so that having begun in the spirit we are consummated in the flesh (Gal. iii. 3). Hence it is that through our lukewarmness and ingratitude we do not any longer "know the things that are given us from God" (1 Cor. ii. 12). We forsake the fear of the Lord, we give up our pious solicitude, we acquire habits of loquacity, curiosity, jesting, yea, even of detraction and murmuring, wasting our time in frivolity, shirking labour and departing from discipline when we can do so without being observed, as if, forsooth, we thus avoided all harm to our souls. What wonder is it, then, that grace cannot flow into us with such and so many obstacles in the way? But even if one "be thankful," as the Apostle says, so that "the word of Christ" and "the word of His grace may dwell in him" (Col. iii. 15, 16; Acts xx. 32), if one be devout and watchful and fervent in spirit: let him still beware of putting his trust in his own merits, of relying upon his own good work. Otherwise, divine grace will not enter his soul. For such a soul is already full and has no room for the gifts of God.

Consider now that Pharisee who prayed in the temple. He was not an extortioner, he was not unjust, neither was he an adulterer. Perhaps you suppose him to have been without the fruits of penance? Far from it. He fasted twice in the week and gave tithes of all he possessed. You are now perhaps thinking that he was ungrateful? But hear what he said: "O

God, I give Thee thanks, etc." (Luke xviii. 11, 12). No, the obstacle to grace in him was that his heart was not void of self-conceit, it was not emptied out, it was not humble but rather proud and elated. For instead of trying to discover what was yet wanting to him (Matt. xix. 20), he exaggerated his merits : but what appeared to him to be the fulness of merit was in reality the inflation of pride. Therefore, he who imagined himself to be full " went down into his house " empty. The Publican, on the contrary, did in truth empty himself ; and because he took care to bring his vessel empty, he returned with a bountiful largess of grace. Therefore, dearest brethren, if we too wish to find grace, let us not only abstain from sin in future, but also do worthy penance for the sins of our past, and let us furthermore be careful to prove ourselves devoted to God and sincerely humble. For it is upon souls with such dispositions that the Lord delights to look with that loving regard whereof the Wise Man says, " The grace of God and His mercy are with His saints, and He hath respect to His chosen " (Wisdom iv. 15). And possibly it is because of the four evils mentioned He calls back the soul whom He looks upon four distinct times, saying, " Return, return, O Sulamitess : return, return, that we may behold thee " (Cant. vi. 12), that is lest she should remain either in a sinful habit, or in a sinful conscience, or in tepidity and the torpor of ingratitude, or in the blindness of self-esteem. From which fourfold danger may He in His mercy recall and deliver us also, " Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and justice, and sanctification, and redemption " (1 Cor. i. 30), Jesus Christ our Lord, Who with the Father and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth one God for everlasting ages of ages. Amen.

SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST.

JUNE 24TH.

ON THE MANNER OF JOHN'S BURNING AND SHINING.

"*He was a burning and a shining light.*"—John v. 35.

My brethren, it seems to me that these assemblies of ours are far from deserving that reproach of the Prophet addressed to the Jews: "Your assemblies are wicked" (Is. i. 13). For our assemblies are not wicked. Quite the contrary: they are manifestly holy, and religious, and full of grace, and worthy of the divine benediction. We come together for two purposes, namely, to hear the word of God in this chapter-house and to adore, supplicate, and praise Him in the church. Both are sacred assemblies, pleasing to the Lord and beloved of His angels. Consequently, dearest brethren, "stand in reverential fear," stand in solicitude and fervour of soul, above all in the place of prayer and in this school of Christ, this lecture-hall of the Holy Spirit. "Look not," most dearly beloved, "at the things which are seen and which are temporal, but at the things which are not seen and are eternal" (2 Cor. iv. 18); "judge not according to the appearance, but judge" according to the principles of faith (John vii. 24). Thus estimated, both these places are very terrible indeed (Gen. xxviii. 17), and contain, as we ought to believe, not fewer angels than men. In both places, undoubtedly, the gate

of heaven stands open (ibid.); in both is erected that mystical ladder on which " the angels are ascending and descending upon the Son of man " (ibid. 12, John i. 51). Oh, how great a giant is this Son of man, Whose throne is the heavens and the earth His footstool (Is. lxvi. 1)! His " magnificence is elevated above the heavens " (Ps. viii. 2), and nevertheless, He abides with us " all days even to the consummation of the world " (Matt. xxviii. 20). The holy angels, therefore, ascend and descend to God, inasmuch as the Head and the body are one Christ.

Nevertheless, it is not wheresoever the Head, but " wheresoever the body shall be, there shall the eagles also be gathered together " (Matt. xxiv. 28), although the Head cannot be separated from the body. For He Who said this, said also, " Where there are two or three gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them " (Matt. xviii. 20). But perhaps someone will say to me: " Where now is Christ? Show us Christ ' and it is enough for us ' " (John xiv. 8). Why do you look around with those curious eyes? Have you come hither to see the Lord and not rather to listen to His word? " The Lord hath opened mine ear," says the Prophet (Is. l. 5). He hath opened mine ear so that I may hear what He speaketh, not enlightened mine eyes that I may see His holy face. Or at any rate He hath opened His own ear to my prayer, not uncovered His countenance for my contemplation. " He standeth behind the wall " (Cant. ii. 9); He hears and is heard, but not yet does He show Himself. He listens to us when we pray, He instructs us when we listen to Him. "Do you seek a proof of Christ That speaketh in me? " (2 Cor. xiii. 3). Well, so He has said, " I am

He That speak justice" (Is. lxiii. 1). Why should He not speak by the mouth He has fashioned? Why should not the Artificer make use of His own tools according to His pleasure? O Lord, open my lips (Ps. l. 17) as well as the ears of those listening to me; and "I will not restrain my lips, O Lord, Thou knowest it" (Ps. xxxix. 10). For it is of Thee the people said of old, "He hath done all things well: He hath made both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak" (Mark vii. 37).

Listen, therefore, my brethren, to what He has said of John, the feast of whose nativity we are solemnising to-day: "He was a burning and a shining light" (John v. 35). A great testimony, most dearly beloved, because great is he to whom it is given, although greater far is He Who gives it. "He," says the Lord, "was a burning and a shining light." For merely to shine is vain, merely to burn is little, but to burn and shine at once—that is perfection. Hear what the Scripture says, "A wise* man continueth in wisdom as the sun, but a fool is changed as the moon" (Ecclus. xxvii. 12). For inasmuch as the moon shines without heat, she shows herself to us at one time full, at another diminished, and sometimes even disappears altogether. Her light, being borrowed, "never continueth in the same state" (Job xiv. 2), but increases, decreases, grows wan, fades away, and is at last utterly extinguished. In the same way, he who puts his conscience in the mouths of other men appears now great, now little, now nothing at all, according as it shall please the

* This reading is found in several Greek and Latin codices, but more commonly instead of "wise" we find "holy." The sense, however, is the same, for as the only real folly is sin, so the only real wisdom is godliness.—(Translator.)

tongues of sycophants to censure or applaud him. The splendour of the sun, on the contrary, is all fiery ; and forasmuch as it burns fiercely it appears the more luminous to the eyes in proportion. It is thus the interior fervour of the wise man shines outwardly : but if it is not possible for him to have both heat and light together, he chooses always to burn, so that " the Father Who seeth in secret may repay him " (Matt. vi. 4). Woe to us, brethren, if we are found to shine without burning ! At present we are shining indeed, and are magnified by men : " but to me it is a very small thing to be judged by man's day " (1 Cor. iv. 3). For " He that judgeth me is the Lord " (ibid. 4), Who requires fervour from all, but not splendour. " I am come," He said, " to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled " (Luke xii. 49) ? This is a matter of universal obligation, this is something which everyone is bound to possess ; and where it is wanting, no excuse is ever admitted.

For the rest, remember that it was to the apostles and apostolic men in particular the Lord gave the command, " Let your light shine before men " (Matt. v. 16). For such are enkindled and powerfully inflamed, and need have no fear of being blown out by a breath or by a gust of wind. To John also the same command was given. But the apostles heard it in the " ear " (Matt. x. 27), whereas the Baptist, as an angel, was instructed in the spirit. For the Baptist stood the nearer to God in proportion as the " voice " (John i. 23)* is nearer to the Word, between which no other

* It will help to the understanding of this to remember that the term ὁ λόγος, found in the original Greek, can signify both the internal word or the idea and the external expression, and that it is here used by St. John in the former signification.

voice that sounds externally ought to intervene; he received his knowledge, not, as others, from the preaching of men, but by divine inspiration, being filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb. Truly burning was he and violently inflamed since he was filled so soon with the celestial fire that he was conscious of the advent of Christ even before he could have been conscious of himself.* For that new fire which, falling from heaven, had entered the Virgin's ear through Gabriel's lips, again, through the Virgin's lips, entered Elizabeth's ear, even to the infant in her womb. And from that moment the Holy Spirit filled His "vessel of election" (Acts ix. 15) in order to "prepare a lamp for Christ the Lord" (Ps. cxxxi. 17). Already, therefore, he was a lighted candle, but as yet under a bushel, until the time came to put the lighted candle "upon a candlestick that it might shine to all that were in the house" (Matt. v. 15) of the Lord. In the meantime all it could do was to shine within its bushel, that is to say, the unborn Baptist could only enlighten his mother, revealing to her mind "the great mystery of godliness" (1 Tim. iii. 16) by leaping in her womb in an excess of newly-experienced joy. "Whence is this to me," she exclaimed, "that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" (ibid. 43).

According to St. Bernard's idea, therefore, the Baptist was the voice or expression of the word—ὁ τοῦ λόγου λώγος—whilst the Word Himself was mute; and in support of this view we may note the interesting fact that St. Matthew sums up the teaching of both Christ and His Precursor in exactly the same words: "Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. iii. 2, iv. 17).—(Translator.)

* That is, according to the ordinary course of nature. But it is a psychological impossibility to have consciousness of outer objects unaccompanied by consciousness of self.—(Translator.)

" But who has indicated to thee, O holy cousin," we may imagine the Virgin replying, " that I am the Mother of the Lord ? ' Whence knowest thou me ? ' (John i. 48)." " Behold as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy " (Luke i. 44).

Consequently, this lighted candle even then illumined the bushel that covered it ; nor did it fail to perceive the presence of that other Lighted Candle, likewise concealed as yet under Its own bushel, but destined soon to fill the whole world with the splendours of a new and glorious dawn. " He was a burning and a shining light," so said the Lord. Notice how He did not say, " a shining and a burning light," because He wished to insinuate that John's splendour proceeded from his fervour, not his fervour from his splendour. There are some, my brethren, who do not shine for the reason that they burn ; on the contrary, they burn in order to shine : they burn, I say, but rather with the desire of vainglory than from the spirit of charity. Do you wish to know what was the manner of John's burning and shining ? It appears to me that he can be proved to have possessed both fervour and splendour in three different ways. He burned with a holy hatred against himself, as shown by the extreme austerity of his life, he burned with a full and heart-felt love for Christ, and he burned with zeal for his neighbour, whose sins he denounced with constancy and courage. His shining also was threefold : briefly, he shone by his example, he shone by his pointing, he shone by his words : presenting himself to us for our imitation, pointing out with his finger the " greater Luminary " (Gen. ii. 16) That lay concealed and was to take away the

sin of the world (1 John i. 29), and also enlightening our darkness with his words according to what is written, "For Thou lightest my lamp, O Lord; O my God, enlighten my darkness" (Ps. xvii. 29), that is, by administering correction.

Consider, therefore, my brethren, this man who was promised by the mouth of an angel, miraculously conceived and sanctified in the womb; and wonder to behold in so singular a saint so singular a devotion to penance. "Having food," says the Apostle, "and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content" (1 Tim. vi. 8). This is apostolic perfection. But even this did not satisfy John. For hear what the Lord says of him in the Gospel: "John came neither eating nor drinking" (Matt. xi. 18), nor, it might be added, wearing clothes; for as locusts cannot be called the food of man but only of certain wild beasts, perhaps, neither ought camel's hair to be regarded as human clothing (Matt. iii. 4). Wherefore, O camel, hast thou put off thy hair? Would to God thou didst rather put off thy hump!* And you, O irrational beasts and reptiles of the desert, how long will you seek after delicate food? John, a man of singular holiness, "a man sent from God" (John i. 6), yea, an angel of God, since of him the Father said to the Son, "Behold I send My angel before Thy face" (Luke vii. 27), this John, than whom "a greater hath not arisen among them that are born of women" (Matt. xi. 11), thus chastises, thus consumes, thus afflicts his most innocent body; and do you desire to be "clothed in purple and

* The Saint is here comparing to a camel the man whose affections are all bent down upon the earth like the eyes of a hunchback. Cf. Ps. lxviii. 24, and Bellarmine's commentary thereon.—(Translator.)

fine linen, and to feast sumptuously"? (Luke xvi. 19). Alas, my brethren! Is it with this kind of vanity alone that the present solemnity is to be honoured? Is this the way in which men prove their devotion to the holy Baptist? Is this the rejoicing which, according to the angel's prophecy, his birth should occasion? (Luke i. 14). O ye over-delicate worshippers, do you know what manner of man he was whose memory you are honouring? Do you know whose birthday you are celebrating? Is it not his who lived in the wilderness, clothed with camel's hair and wasted from fasting? O ye sons of Babylon, "what went you out into the desert to see? A reed shaken with the wind? What then? A man clothed in soft garments?" (Matt. xi. 7, 8). A man nourished with delicate food? One might be led to think so from your manner of solemnising this festival which you honour no otherwise than by pursuing the wind of popular favour,* by the splendour of costly attire, and by the pleasures of the table. But what could be less in keeping with the Baptist's birthday? For John certainly gave you no example of this kind; he never could take delight in such vanities.

"Many," said the angel, "shall rejoice in his nativity" (Luke i. 14). The prophecy has been fulfilled. Even still "many rejoice in his nativity." That day, so we are informed, is kept with joy and solemnity even by the pagans. They, however, honour what they know not (John iv. 22), but this should not be the case with Christians. Nevertheless, although Christians keep the birthday of St. John the Baptist as a day of rejoicing, it is much to be feared that they rejoice more in worldly vanity than over the Precursor's nativity.

* "Aura popularis favoris," a phrase of Livy's.—(Translator.)

What but " vanity of vanities " (Eccles. i. 2) is everything that is under the sun ? Or " what hath man more of his labour " wherewith he hath wearied himself under the sun ? (Eccles. iii. 9, 11, 22). Brethren, under the sun is all that you can perceive with your eyes, all that is illumined by this corporeal light. And what is all that but " a vapour which appeareth for a little while " (James iv. 15) ? What is it, I say, but grass and the flower thereof ? " All flesh is grass," saith the Lord, " and all the glory thereof as the flower of the field. The grass is withered and the flower is fallen, but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever "(Is. xl. 6-8). It is in this Word we ought to labour, dearest brethren, in which alone we can attain to everlasting life and happiness. Let us " labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting " (John vi. 27). And what is that meat ? Listen : " not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God " (Matt. iv. 4). Most dearly beloved, let us sow our seed in this Word, let us " sow in the Spirit," because " he that soweth in his flesh, of the flesh also shall reap corruption " (Gal. vi. 8). Let our rejoicing be not " under the sun," but in the interior of the heart. As the Apostle counsels, let us be " as sorrowful " in the humility and gravity of our external deportment, " yet always rejoicing " (2 Cor. vi. 10) on account of inward consolation. Yes, dearest brethren, let us rejoice on this feast of the nativity of the blessed John, and let the motive of our joy be the object of the festival.

We have indeed in the Precursor's memory abundant reason for rejoicing, manifold motives for gladness. " He was a burning and a shining light " and the

Jews " were willing for a time to rejoice in his light " (John v. 35). But for himself, he chose rather to rejoice in the fervour of devotion, to " rejoice with joy because of the Bridegroom's voice," as being " the friend of the Bridegroom " (John iii. 29). We ought to rejoice in both his light and his heat, in the latter for his sake, for our own sake in the former. For his shining was for us and his burning for himself. Let us, then, so rejoice in his fervour that we shall learn to imitate it, and let us so rejoice in his light that we shall not rest therein, but " in his light may see the Light " (Ps. xxxv. 10), " the true Light " (John i. 9). Which he was not, but to Which he rendered testimony (ibid. 8). " John came neither eating nor drinking," said the Lord. This is for me an incentive to fervour and a motive of humility. Which of us, my brethren, after considering the Baptist's penance, will presume—I do not say to magnify, but—to set any value at all upon his own ? Which of us will dare to murmur at the labours imposed on him, and to answer, " My sufferings are already sufficiently—not to say, excessively—great." For what murders, what sacrileges, what abominations was John guilty of that he should chastise himself with such unsparing severity ? Oh, let us be inflamed with zeal for penance, dearest brethren, let us carefully scrutinise our conscience, and let us be animated with courage to wreak a holy vengeance on ourselves ; so that in the time to come we may be able to escape the fearful judgment of the Living God (Heb. x. 31). And whatsoever may be wanting to our fervour, let the humility of a sincere confession supply. For " God is faithful," and " if we confess our sins," if we expose to Him our miseries, if we attempt not

to excuse our defects, " He will cleanse us from all iniquity " (1 John i. 9).

Having now seen the Baptist's severity towards himself, consider next the burning ardour of his zeal against the sins of his neighbour. For in the matter of zeal, this is the right order and what reason approves, namely, that one should remember to begin with oneself. Hence the Psalmist sings, addressing the Lord, " From my secret sins cleanse me, O Lord, and from those of others spare Thy servant " (Ps. xviii. 13, 14). " Ye offspring of vipers," said John to the Jews, " who hath shewed you to flee from the wrath to come ? " (Luke iii. 7). How great, think you, must have been the fervour of mind that could send forth such sparks, nay, such " desolating coals " (Ps. cxix. 4)! Nor did he spare the Pharisees, but rebuked them with equal boldness, crying out, " Do not begin to say : we have Abraham for our father. For I say to you : God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham " (Luke iii. 8). It might seem, however, that he had not given sufficient proof of fortitude unless he also showed himself fearless before the face of the powerful, and reproved with all liberty of spirit a sinful monarch, as cruel as he was proud ; unless, after coming forth from the desert, under the impulse of ardent zeal and with that purpose, he made it clear that he could be induced neither by favours nor by frowns, nor even by the threat of death, to turn aside from the path of duty. " Herod feared John," says the Evangelist, and when " he heard him did many things, and he heard him willingly " (Mark vi. 20). Yet not on that account did the Baptist spare the adulterer, but told him plainly, " It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife '

(ibid. 18). And when bound and thrust into prison, " he stood in the truth " (John viii. 44) with the same unyielding fortitude, and at length had the supreme happiness of giving his life for the truth. Most dearly beloved, let us also be inflamed with this holy zeal, let us burn like John with the love of justice and the hatred of iniquity (Ps. xliv. 8). Let us, my dearest brethren, learn from him never to flatter vice, never to connive at wickedness, never to say, " Am I my brother's keeper ? " (Gen. iv. 9) ; never to see good order suffering and discipline relaxing, with the calmness of unconcern and without doing our very utmost to prevent it. For to be silent about evil when thou art in a position to protest, is the same thing as to consent to that evil. And we know that the one penalty is appointed for those that do the evil and for those that consent to it (Rom. i. 32).

I now come to speak of John's humble and most intensely fervent devotion to his Lord. But what shall I say of it ? It was that which made him leap with exultation in his mother's womb ; it was that which caused him to tremble when about to baptise his Lord in the Jordan ; it was that which made him acknowledge not only that he was not the Christ, as he was supposed to be (John i. 20), but that he was " not worthy to loose the latchet of His shoes " (Luke iii. 16) ; it was that which made him as " the friend of the Bridegroom, to rejoice with joy because of the Bridegroom's voice " (John iii. 29) ; it was that, finally, which made him avow that he had " received of His fulness grace for grace " (John i. 16) and that to Him was given the Spirit not " by measure " (ibid. 34), but in plenitude wherein we might all participate.

Therefore, " shall not my soul be subject to God ? " (Ps. lxi. 1). For I cannot be " a burning light " unless I love the Lord my God with my whole heart, and with my whole soul, and with my whole strength (Deut. vi. 5) ; since nothing but divine charity can cause me to burn unto salvation, nothing but that charity which is infused and inflamed by the Holy Spirit (Rom. v. 5) Whom we are warned not to extinguish (1 Thess. v. 19). You now understand how John burned. And in explaining this, I have also indicated—as you may have noticed—the manner of his shining. In fact, it is only through his outward shining that his inward heat could become known to us at all.

He shone, therefore, as already stated, by his example, by his pointing, and by his words, showing us himself by his actions, pointing out Christ to us with his finger, revealing to us ourselves by his preaching. " And thou, child," said his father, " shalt be called the prophet of the Most High, for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to His people " (Luke i. 76, 77). Observe, he does not say, " to give salvation " for " he was not the Light " (John i. 8), but " to give knowledge of salvation," that he might " give testimony of the Light " (ibid. 7) : " to give knowledge of salvation to his people unto the remission of their sins." Can any person of prudence make little of this knowledge of salvation ? Let us suppose the Precursor has not yet appeared, has not yet pointed out to us the Saviour. Whither shall we look for salvation ? I have committed a most heinous crime which " the blood of goats or of calves " (Heb. ix. 12) is powerless to efface, because the Most High has no pleasure in whole burnt-offerings

(Ps. l. 18). My memory is stained with the dregs of this filthy oil, and there is no knife that can scrape clean this parchment, for it has entirely absorbed the sediment and is wholly saturated therewith. If I forget my fault, I become guilty of folly and ingratitude ; if it endures in my memory, it will torment me for ever. What then shall I do ? I will go to John, I will listen to " the voice of joy and gladness " (Jer. xxxiii. 11), the voice of mercy, " the word of grace " (Acts xx. 32), the word of pardon and peace : " Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him Who taketh away the sins of the world " (John i. 29). And in another place he says, " He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom " (John iii. 29). He tells us, therefore, that God has come, that the Lamb has come, that the Bridegroom has come. Now, since He That is come is God, He certainly has the power to forgive sin ; but whether or not He has also the good will remains still uncertain. All doubt, however, vanishes when we are told that He is the Bridegroom, and consequently full of sweetness and amiability. And John himself is " the friend of the Bridegroom " (ibid.), because the Bridegroom can have about Him none but friends. He desires indeed to have " a glorious spouse, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing " (Ephes. v. 27) ; nevertheless, He does not seek for such—for where indeed could such be found ?—but He rather designs to form such and to " present her to Himself " (ibid.). Hear what He has said by the mouth of His Prophet : " It is commonly said : If a man put away his wife and she go from him and marry another man, shall he return to her any more ? . . . But thou hast gone after many lovers ; nevertheless, return to Me, saith the Lord, and I will receive thee " (Jer. iii. 1). Behold, my

brethren, what He is able to do, and behold what He desires to do.

But perhaps you fear the " purgation of sins " which He has come to make (Heb. i. 3), imagining that with fire and iron He will penetrate to the bone and to the marrow of the bone, inflicting pain more terrible than death itself ? Listen : He comes as a Lamb, He comes in all mildness, with nothing more frightening than milk and wool, justifying the impious with the easy remedy of a word. What can be easier, as the Poet says,* than to speak a word ? " Only say the word," cried the Centurion, " and my servant shall be healed " (Matt. viii. 8). Why then should we hesitate any longer and not " go with confidence to the throne of grace " (Heb. iv. 13) ? Let us give thanks to John, and from him pass on to Christ (John i. 37), because, as he has himself said, " He must increase, but I must decrease " (John v. 30). But in what manner must John decrease ? In his splendour, doubtless, not in his fervour. He has recalled his rays, he has collected himself within himself, lest he should be as the fool that " giveth forth all his spirit " (Prov. xxix. 11). " He must increase," Who can never be exhausted, " of Whose fulness we have all received " (John i. 16) ; " but I must decrease," he says, " for to me ' God hath given the Spirit by measure ' (John iii. 34), and I must see how I shall be able to burn always rather than to shine. I have preceded the Sun, like the morning star : therefore, it is necessary that I should fade now when the Sun has arisen. ' I have but a little oil to anoint me ' (4 Kings iv. 2), and I want to keep that little in my vessel where it will be safer than in the lamp."

* Terence, *Phorm.* II. i. 70.

SERMON FOR THE VIGIL OF SS. PETER AND PAUL.

On the Reflections that should occupy us on the Vigils of the Saints.

" The path of the just is right to walk in."—Is. xxvi. 7.

My brethren, the spiritual man who desires to celebrate the solemnities of the saints " in spirit and in truth " (John iv. 24) must faithfully keep watch on their vigils. We have to distinguish two kinds of vigils. There are the vigils which the carnal-minded keep and there are the vigils kept by spiritual persons. The former are celebrated with more splendid attire and more sumptuous feasting than usual, and likely enough are stained with " the works of darkness " (Rom. xiii. 12) by them that " are glad when they have done evil and rejoice in most wicked things " (Prov. ii. 14). " But you have not so learned Christ " (Ephes. iv. 20), you who " have left all things and have followed Christ " (Matt. xix. 27), and who are expected to consider with attentive mind what the name of vigil signifies. For this is the purpose of the institution of vigils : that we may awake on these days, if perchance we should have fallen asleep in sin or slothfulness, and may " anticipate the face of the saints with confession " (Ps. xciv. 2)—the confession of praise. " Not so," the children of this world, " not so " (Ps. i. 4) they " that are mighty to drink wine, and stout men at drunkenness " (Is. v. 22), who slumber

tranquilly in their crimes and abominations. Do not forget what the Apostle says: "They that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that are drunk are drunk in the night" (1 Thess. v. 7): to speak to whom of holy vigils would be waste of words, because they like better to sleep than to watch. "But you are the children of light and children of the day, not of the night nor of darkness" (ibid. 5), and you do not wish that the solemnities of the saints should come upon you by surprise and find you unprepared.

There are three things, my brethren, which we ought to consider carefully on such solemnities, to wit, the assistance of the saints, the examples they have left us, and the (for us) humiliating contrast of their lives with our own. With regard to their assistance, it is certain that they who had such power upon earth are now still more powerful in heaven, where they stand before the face of the Lord their God. And surely they who, whilst living here below, compassionated sinners and prayed for them, now also supplicate the Father in our behalf, and that the more earnestly in proportion to their fuller knowledge of our miseries. For charity loses none of its warmth in the heavenly homeland: quite the contrary. Neither ought we to suppose that because the saints have lost the power of suffering, they have likewise lost the power to sympathise with suffering. No, no, dearest brethren; but it is rather then they fully put on "the bowels of mercy" (Luke i. 78) when they come to stand near mercy's source. There is another reason also by which the saints are more powerfully induced to interest themselves in our welfare: it is that, as the Apostle says, "God hath provided for us that they should not

be perfected without us" (Heb. xi. 40). Similar in sense are the words of holy David, "The just wait for me until Thou reward me" (Ps. cxli. 8).

We should also consider the example of the saints, who, whilst they were "seen upon earth and conversed with men" (Bar. iii. 38) "declined not to the right nor to the left" (Prov. iv. 27), but followed the royal road until they came to Him Who has said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (John xiv. 6). Reflect on the humility of their works and the authority of their words, and so shalt thou see how by word and example they shone amongst men, so shalt thou see the footprints they have left for our guidance, that walking in them we may not wander from the right way. For, as the Prophet truly says, "The way of the just is right, the path of the just is right to walk in" (Is. xxvi. 7).

But let us consider likewise, yea, and more attentively, the humiliating contrast between our own lives and the life of the particular saint whose feast we may happen to be celebrating. For he "was a man, passible like unto us" (James v. 17), "fashioned from the clay" (Wisdom xv. 7) as ourselves. How is it, then, that we judge it not only difficult but even impossible for us to do what another man has done, and to follow in his footsteps?* Dearest brethren, let us be confounded, yea, and let us tremble, too, at this thought: for such confusion may well be the means of bringing us to glory, and such fear may become for us a very fountain of grace. Yes, my brethren, mortal men like

* It was this reflection that fixed the inconstancy of the great St. Augustine. "Tu non poteris quod isti et istae?" he asked himself: "Cannot you do what these men and women have done?"—Confess. l. viii. c. x. § 3.—(Translator.)

ourselves were the saints who have preceded us, who have walked in the ways of life with such wonderful constancy that we find it hard to believe they were not more than mortal. In this way, then, should we be filled with both joy and confusion on the solemnities of the saints: with joy at the thought that we have sent advocates before us, with confusion to think that we cannot imitate them. Thus ought our joy in this valley of tears to be seasoned with " the bread of tears " (Ps. lxxix. 6), so that " mourning may take hold " not only " of the end of our joy " (Prov. xiv. 13), but even of its beginning: because although the reasons for rejoicing are abundant, far more abundant are the motives for grief. " I remembered God, and was delighted," sings the Psalmist, but he immediately adds, " My spirit swooned away; I was troubled and I spoke not " (Ps. lxxvi. 4, 5).

But, my brethren, if we ought to occupy ourselves with these reflections on the vigils of the feasts of all the saints, what should we do on the festival day of the two chiefs of the holy apostles—I mean, Saints Peter and Paul? The commemoration of either of them alone would suffice to fill the whole earth with exultation (Ps. xlvii. 3), but the two are united in one and the same solemnity to make the gladness still more abounding and that they who so loved each other in life might not in death be parted (2 Kings i. 23). Oh, how great was their power whilst they still lived upon earth, to one of whom had been given " the keys of the kingdom of heaven " (Matt. xvi. 19), and to the other the mission to evangelise the nations; the one slew Ananias and Saphira with the words of his mouth (Acts v. 1-10), the other bestowed whatever he had to

bestow in the name and person of Jesus Christ,* and "when he was so weak, then was he powerful" (2 Cor. xii. 10). But if such was their power on earth, how much greater must we not suppose it to be now in heaven? And what saint has ever bequeathed us nobler examples than they who were constantly afflicted "in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" and in all the other things enumerated by Paul (2 Cor. xi. 23-28), and who finally entered the heavenly kingdom by a most glorious martyrdom? Good cause in truth have we to feel confounded in the presence of these whom we hardly dare look at, not to speak of imitating. Let us therefore beseech them to render propitious to us their Friend and our Judge, Who is God above all things and blessed for evermore. Amen.

* Allusion to St. Paul's familiar salutation: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

FIRST SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF SS. PETER AND PAUL.

How the Holy Apostles have taught us to live.

" He shall sit solitary and hold his peace, because he hath raised himself above himself."—Jer. Lam. iii. 28.

Magnificent, dearest brethren, is the feast we solemnise to-day, a feast instituted to honour the most glorious death of two illustrious martyrs, the chief amongst the martyrs and the princes of the holy apostles. I am speaking of Saints Peter and Paul those two grand luminaries, placed by the Lord as two eyes, so to speak, in the forefront of His Church. They have been assigned to me as masters and mediators, to whose care I can securely commit myself; for they " have made known to me the ways of life " (Ps. xv. 11), and through them I shall be able to ascend to that other Mediator Who hath come to " make peace through the Blood of His cross both as to the things on earth and the things that are in heaven " (Col. i. 20). Absolutely pure in both His Natures is He " Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth " (1 Peter ii. 22). How then shall I have the presumption to approach Him directly, I who am a sinner, who have multiplied my offences beyond the sands of the seashore? How shall utter filthiness draw nigh to infinity purite? I have good reason to be afraid lest I should " fall into the hands of the

Living God" (Heb. x. 31) if I ventured to approach and to attach myself to Him from Whom I am separated by as wide a difference as there is between good and evil. Therefore has God given me for my mediators these two saints who are but men like myself, who have been sinners also like me, and very great sinners, and who consequently have learned from themselves and from their own experience how they ought to compassionate others. For being themselves guilty of great crimes, they will readily pardon other great criminals; and with what measure the Lord has meted to them, they will measure to us again (Matt. vii. 2). The Apostle Peter perpetrated a most grievous crime, a crime than which no greater perhaps has ever been committed. And nevertheless he obtained pardon without the least delay or difficulty, and so complete a pardon that he forfeited nothing of his singular prerogative as head of the Church. The Apostle Paul likewise, after rending the very vitals of the infant Church with unparalleled rage and cruelty, was called to the faith by the voice of the Son of God Himself, and was requited with so much good for all the evil he had done that he became "a vessel of election to carry His name before the gentiles and kings and the children of Israel" (Acts ix. 15), a worthy vessel, full of heavenly meats of all kinds and containing medicine for the ailing as well as substantial nourishment for the strong (1 Cor. iii. 2).

My brethren, the pastors and teachers appointed for men ought to have meekness, power and wisdom. They ought to be meek, that they may receive me with kindness and compassion; they ought to be powerful, to afford me a secure protection; they ought

to be wise, in order that they may bring me to the path and along the path that leads to the holy city. Now, where can you find greater meekness than that shown by Peter, who with infinite sweetness invited all sinners to come to him, as you may read in his Epistles and in the Acts of the Apostles? Where greater power than that of him to whom the very earth was obedient, giving up the dead at his command, to whose footsteps the sea afforded a firm pathway, who "with the spirit of his mouth" (2 Thess. ii. 8) struck down to earth the soaring Simon Magus,* who alone has been entrusted with the keys of the kingdom of heaven, so that the sentence of God Himself follows and confirms the sentence pronounced by Peter? "Whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth," said Christ to him, "it shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth it shall be loosed also in heaven" (Matt. xvi. 19). Where again will you find greater wisdom than his, to whom not flesh and blood but the Father in heaven communicated with so much generosity that wisdom which comes from heaven? (ibid. 17). Most gladly too shall I follow Paul who, in the excess of his sweetness, wept over those that had sinned and had done no penance

* The Saint is here alluding to a very ancient tradition concerning the fate of Simon Magus. After his encounter with the Apostles in Samaria (Acts viii.) the Magician, so it appears, proceeded to Rome, where his skill in the magical arts won him the interest and favour of Nero. One day, in the Emperor's presence, he was giving a new exhibition of superhuman power by lifting himself high into the air, when St. Peter, desiring to put an end to the scandal, made the sign of the cross, and at once the unfortunate Simon came violently to the ground, breaking both his legs in the fall. It was in revenge for this, according to St. Epiphanius, that Nero ordered the arrest of SS. Peter and Paul. Cf. A Lapide, *Comment. on Acts* viii. 24. — (Translator.)

(2 Cor. xii. 21), who was mightier than powers and principalities (Rom. viii. 38), who brought down wisdom in abundance and the most hidden sense of the Holy Scriptures, not from the first, not from the second, but from the third and highest heavens (2 Cor. xii. 2).

Such, dearest brethren, are our masters. They have been fully instructed in the ways of life by the Sovereign Master of all, and what they received from Him they have been communicating to us, even down to the present time. What therefore have the holy apostles taught us and what are they teaching us still? Not the art of fishing, not the art of tent-making (Acts xviii. 3), nor anything else of that kind; not how to read Plato or how to use with skill the Aristotelian syllogisms, or how to be always learning and never arriving at the knowledge of truth. No, what Peter and Paul have taught me is how I ought to live. Brethren, does it seem to you an unimportant acquisition to have learned how to live? Oh, be sure it is a great matter to know this, the most valuable knowledge that can be acquired. *He* does not truly live who is inflated with pride or soiled with luxury or corrupted with any other vicious habit; for to be thus in thraldom to passion is not to live but to waste one's life and to "draw nigh even to the gates of death" (Ps. cvi. 18). What constitutes a good life in my judgment is this: to suffer evil as thou oughtest and to do good, and so to persevere to the hour of death. We hear it commonly said that to eat well is to live well; but herein "iniquity hath lied to itself" (Ps. xxvi. 12). For no man lives well but he that does well.

Now, as it seems to me, thou that livest in a com-

munity livest well if thou livest an orderly, sociable, and humble life ; an orderly life with regard to thyself, a sociable life with regard to thy brethren, an humble life with regard to God. Thou shalt live an orderly life if in thy whole conduct thou art solicitous to watch over thy ways both in the sight of God and in the sight of thy brother, preserving him from scandal and thyself from sin. Thou shalt live sociably if thou strivest to be amiable towards all and to love all, to show thyself kind and affable, to support not alone with patience but even with gladness the infirmities of thy brethren, whether of body or soul. Thou shalt live humbly if, having done all this, thou dost labour to extinguish the spirit of vainglory which such virtuous practices are calculated to engender, and art careful never to consent to its suggestions, no matter how strong thou mayest feel them to be. So much for well-doing.

But in the endurance of evil also thou must exercise a threefold care, corresponding to the threefold evil which thou art obliged to support. For there is the evil which thou sufferest from thyself, and the evil which thou sufferest from thy neighbour, and the evil which comes to thee from God. The first consists in the sharpness of self-inflicted penance, the second of trials due to the malice of others, the third of the sufferings sent by Providence for thy correction. Now that which thou sufferest from thyself thou oughtest to offer as a " voluntary sacrifice " (Ps. liii. 8), the evil done thee by thy neighbour thou oughtest to endure with patience, whilst that which comes from God ought to be borne not only without discontent but even with thanksgiving. But such dispositions are not found with

many of Adam's children who " have wandered in a wilderness, in a place without water " (Ps. cvi. 4). Wandered they have indeed, and still they wander out of " the way of truth " (Tobias i. 2), they who, withdrawing into the wilderness of pride, do not want to live a community life, because their singularity can admit of no fellowship. And they wander " in a place without water," because they are never bedewed with the rain of contrite tears, and they live in a land sterile and parched from perpetual drought. Consequently, " they have found not the way of a city for their habitation " (ibid.), because they have " grown old in a strange land " and " have been defiled with the dead " and " counted with them that go down into hell " (Bar. iii. 11).

Not such shall be the solitude of him of whom the Prophet Jeremias says, " It is good for a man when he hath borne the yoke from his youth. He shall sit solitary and hold his peace, because he hath raised himself above himself " (Jer. Lam. iii. 27, 28). Those other solitaries wandered from the way, but this one shall sit ; " they always err in heart " (Ps. xciv. 10), whilst he, although he does not now sit, nevertheless shall then sit solitary when he has attained to the singular honour in store for him, the honour of that judicial office which " the saints shall receive in their own land," where " everlasting joy shall be unto them " (Is. lxi. 7). It is said also that " he shall hold his peace," that is, he shall judge with tranquillity, as the Lord God of Sabaoth judgeth all things with tranquillity (Wisdom xii. 18). Wherefore ? " Because he hath raised himself above himself," that is to say, although still a young man and exposed to the violence

of the passions belonging to youth, he hath put on the sobriety characteristic of old age, laying aside what he was and assuming what he was not. "He hath raised himself," says the Prophet, "above himself." Yes, because he has learned to look, not at himself, but at Him Who is higher than himself. For "he shall sit and hold his peace" even in this present life, undisturbed by the tumult of diabolical suggestions, of carnal desires and of worldly distractions. Happy the soul that, although hearing, has not hearkened to the clamour of such tongues! But happier far is the soul —if indeed there be any such—to whom these tongues are altogether silent! My brethren, this is the wisdom which the Apostle spoke "among the perfect," "a wisdom hidden in a mystery, which none of the princes of this world knew" (1 Cor. ii. 6, 7). Here is how the holy apostles have taught me to live and to elevate myself above myself. All thanks to Thee, Lord Jesus, "because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones" (Matt. xi. 25), to those, namely, that "have left all things and have followed Thee" (Matt. xix. 27).

SECOND SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF SS. PETER AND PAUL.

"*Thy friends, O God, are made exceedingly honourable, their principality is exceedingly strengthened.*"—Ps. cxxxviii. 17.

Brethren, the two apostles, the memory of whose glorious martyrdom is honoured to-day, have left us abundant matter and no lack of motives for a sermon on their feast. There is only one thing I am afraid of. It is that hearing so often the words of salvation, you may begin to have a disgust for them as being only words. The word of man indeed, is a volatile thing, with no mass, no weight, no worth, no solidity. It beats (*verberat*) the air—from which fact it is called in Latin " verbum " ; it is as " a leaf that is carried away with the wind " (Job xiii. 25), which is blown about and attracts no observation. Dearest brethren let none of you receive the word of God with such carelessness, or rather with such contempt. For I say to you : he that does so, it were better for that man if he had never heard it (Matt. xxvi. 24). The words of God are the fruits of life, not the mere useless leaves ; but if you insist on calling them leaves, let them be at any rate golden leaves. Therefore, they should not be treated as of small account, they should not be suffered to slip by and escape. You ought even to " gather up the fragments that remain, lest they be lost " (John vi. 12). Remember that " the earth that drinketh in the rain which cometh often upon it, and bringeth forth " no fruit " is reprobate, and very near unto a

curse " (Heb. v. 7, 8). And that fig-tree, likewise, of which we read in the Gospel (Luke xiii. 6, 7), if it was found still barren after " the dresser of the vineyard " had " digged about it and dunged it " : was not the axe to be laid at once to the root of that tree ? (Matt. iii. 10).

Believe me, brethren, even should the Lord find less good in worldlings than in our community, He will have more patience with them than with us, for whom He hath " set aside the free rain " (Ps. lxvii. 10) of His heavenly consolations, to whom has been wanting neither the hoe of discipline nor the dung of poverty and abjection. What but dung are " the abominations of the Egyptians " which " we sacrifice to the Lord our God " ? (Exod. viii. 27). Dung, my brethren, although not very attractive to the eye, is nevertheless very useful for fructification ; nor should he be repelled by its ugliness who desires to make his farm fruitful : because it is out of that ugly heap of dung when carted to the field, shall spring up the beautiful sheaves of corn which you will see carried home to the farmyard. Consequently, we must never feel disgust for the precious vileness of our state. Rather ought we to " esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of the Egyptians " (Heb. xi. 26). But the rain of heaven also is not wanting to the dwellers on this earthly dunghill, for you are given devotion in prayer, joy in the chanting of the psalms, the sweetness of meditation, and " the comfort of the Scriptures " (Rom. xv. 4). And in addition to this, there is the rain of spiritual consolation which you receive through my lips, if ever any small drops from the river whose stream " maketh the

city of God joyful" (Ps. xlv. 5), or from "the torrent of His pleasure" (Ps. xxxv. 9) happen to fall upon your hearts whilst I am discoursing on these things.

But inasmuch as "they have made me keeper in the vineyards" (Cant. i. 5) and dresser of the vines, I am occasionally obliged to "dig about" certain trees and to "dung them." Alas for me! "My own vineyard I have not kept" (ibid.) or cultivated; nevertheless, so long as I hold my present position, it is necessary that I should sometimes be found digging about and dunging in the other vineyards committed to my care. This certainly is an unpleasant task, yet one which I dare not neglect; because I am not ignorant that the unfruitful tree shall suffer much more from the axe than from the spade, that it has less to fear from the dung than from the fire. Accordingly, I am sometimes compelled to reprove and to scold. But I know that reproachful and upbraiding words are like dung, and soil him who utters them without the excuse of necessity. But how is it, brethren, that, whilst some are improved by this kind of dung, we see others rendered stony and obdurate? Hence it is written, "The sluggard shall be made stony * with the dung of oxen" (Ecclus. xxii. 2). Is *he* not improved and spiritually fattened who, when reprimanded, receives the correction with good grace, answers gently, and labours cheerfully to rid him of his fault? Such fatness is undoubtedly both wholesome and fruitful; so that the Psalmist had good reason to say, "The just man shall correct me in mercy, and shall reprove

* "Lapidabitur," which means "shall be pelted with stones," the Saint's interpretation is purely accommodative.—(Translator.)

me : but let not the oil of the sinner fatten my head " (Ps. xlv. 5). For out of the fatness produced by " the oil of the sinner " the old " thorns and thistles " (Gen. iii. 18) shall spring in greater abundance, and the old " root of bitterness " (Heb. xii. 15) shall more generously sprout forth.

He, therefore, who calls the correction of the just man a mercy, clearly indicates how we ought to receive it, with what willingness and devotion of mind, and with what gratitude to him who offers it. For so it shall become for us a wholesome fatness, prolific—not of vice, as " the oil of the sinner," but—of that fruit which, as the Apostle says, we " have unto sanctification " (Rom. vi. 22). But what shall I do with thee, O sluggard, whom this mercy rather irritates and exasperates ? Did I not spread good manure in thy field ? Whence, then, hath it stones ? (Matt. xiii. 27). It is thou, O man, who art thine own enemy—for " he that loveth iniquity, hateth his own soul " (Ps. x. 6)—it is thou, I say, that hast done this (Matt. xiii. 27, 28). By continuing to excuse thy sloth instead of shaking it off, thou art changing into stones what has been given thee as dung, and what was meant to fatten thee has only hardened thee the more. I have spoken to you in this way, dearest brethren, in order to make you understand how willingly we ought to hear, how devoutly we ought to embrace, and how diligently we ought to guard whatever appertains to the salvation of our souls, regarding it not as the word of man, but as the word of God—which it truly is—whether it be consoling, or admonitory, or even reprehensive. Pardon me, brethren : I have wandered from my theme and

almost lost sight of the solemnity we are celebrating. However, I do not think the time will have passed without profit if what I have been saying has sunk into your souls.

Let me now at last endeavour to say something—though it must be short—on the subject of the feast. To-day, then, we keep the festival of the two glorious apostles of Christ, St. Peter and St. Paul. Now, although I am aware that it is our duty to render these the highest honour, I very much doubt whether it is in our power to render them any real honour at all. Listen to what the Psalmist says, "Thy friends, O God, are made exceedingly honourable, their principality is exceedingly strengthened" (Ps. cxxxviii. 17). And consider, brethren: if whilst sojourning still on earth they were able to do all things, not indeed by their own power but in Christ (Phil. iv. 13): what shall we suppose impossible to them to-day, when they live and reign with Christ in everlasting felicity? Whilst as yet they were mortal and destined for dissolution like other mortals, they seemed to have authority over life and death, for with a word they could take life from the living and restore it to the dead (Acts v. 5-10, ix. 40): how much more now, when they "are made exceedingly honourable" and "their principality exceedingly strengthened"? But what think you? Has the present festival in honour of the holy apostles been instituted as a solemn commemoration of their birth, or of their conversion, or of their life and miracles? No, certainly not. The feast we celebrate to-day is not kept in honour of a human nativity, just as not long ago we celebrated the birthday of St. John the

Baptist: he is honoured at his birth, because he was born sanctified. John, my brethren, is the only martyr whose nativity is more illustrious than his martyrdom; for although he died for Christ, inasmuch as he died a martyr to justice and truth, it is nevertheless more manifest that he was born for Christ, being "a man sent from God" (John i. 6), who "for this was born and for this came he into the world: that he might give testimony to the truth" (John xviii. 37). Neither do we commemorate to-day the conversion of the apostles, or their miracles; for we have two other festivals on which the Church brings back to our thought with exultant joy the conversion of the one and the deliverance of the other from prison by the hand of an angel.* What we honour more particularly on this feast is rather their death, than which nothing inspires more horror amongst men who estimate things according to human standards.

But consider, my brethren, the judgment of holy Church, which, as the Saviour recommends (John vii. 24), judges according to the truth of faith, "not according to the appearance." For on this their principal solemnity, she commemorates the death of the blessed apostles. To-day is the anniversary of Peter's crucifixion and of Paul's decapitation. This is the cause of the present festivity, this is the motive of our rejoicing to-day. Now in keeping the anniversary of such events as a day of joy and exultation, the Church proves beyond doubt that she has the Spirit of her Bridegroom, the Spirit of the Lord, "in Whose sight," as the Psalmist sings, "precious is the death of His saints" (Ps. cxv. 13). There were many, as we may

* The feast of St. Peter's Chains, August 1.

suppose, amongst the witnesses of the apostles' martyrdom who by no means envied them their precious death. For " in the sight of the unwise they seemed to die, and this departure was taken for misery, and their going away for utter destruction " (Wisdom iii. 2, 3). " But to me," exclaims the Prophet, " Thy friends, O God, are made exceedingly honourable, their principality is exceedingly strengthened." My brethren, the friends of God " in the eyes of the unwise seem to die," but in the eyes of the prudent they seem only to slumber. So Lazarus slept, because he was the friend of Christ (John xi. 11). And it is said in the psalm, " when He shall give sleep to His beloved, behold the inheritance of the Lord " (Ps. cxxvi. 2, 3).

Dearest brethren, let us endeavour to live like the saints, but let us be still more solicitous to die like the saints. For wisdom " preferreth the latter end of the just " (Wisdom ii. 16), and she judgeth us according as she findeth us there. It is an absolute necessity that the end of our present existence shall cohere with the beginning of the future ; nor is it possible to have here any deformity. For, just as if a person wanted to sew or to tie together two girdles, however careless he might be about the other parts, he would endeavour at all events to have conformity in the extremities to be united, so as to facilitate their union : in the same way, I assure you, we must adjust the end of our temporal life to the commencement of our eternal. For no matter how spiritual the rest of our life may have been, if the consummation thereof be carnal (Gal. iii. 3), it cannot now cohere with the spiritual life of heaven, since as it is written, " flesh and blood cannot possess the kingdom of God " (1 Cor. xv. 50). My

son," says the Wise Man, " in all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin " (Ecclus. vii. 40). Yes, because the recollection of that more than anything else makes a man fearful, and fear drives out sin from the soul and is incompatible with negligence.

Here, my brethren, you have the reason why Moses exclaimed, with reference to certain men, " Oh, that they would be wise and would understand, and would provide for their last end ! " (Deut. xxxii. 29). In these words I observe three things commended to us, namely, wisdom, understanding, and providence of the future ; which, as I think, can be referred to the three different parts of time, in such a manner that they seem to form in us a kind of image of eternity,* wisdom governing things present, understanding pronouncing on things past, and providence cautiously making provision for " the last things." This is, in fact, the sum total of the spiritual life, this is the one way to practise spirituality : to dispose the present wisely, to " recount all the years of the past in bitterness of soul " (Is. xxxviii. 15), and to make careful provision for the time to come. " We should live soberly, and justly, and piously in this world," says the Apostle (Titus ii. 12). That is, we ought to practise sobriety in the present ; we ought to redeem the past (which has gone by without yielding us any fruits of salvation) by adequate atonement, we ought to oppose the buckler of piety to the dangers that menace us in the future ; for piety—which consists in the humble and fervent worship of God—and piety alone " is profitable to all things "

* That is to say, when the three parts of time exist thus together in consciousness we shall have a duration " tota simul," which according to Boethius is the characteristic of eternity.—(Translator.)

(1 Tim. iv. 8). With respect to our "last end" we cannot otherwise provide for that than by pondering in diligent meditation all the perils which appear to threaten us, to learn to have no reliance at all on our own industry, and especially on our own merits, but to commit ourselves exclusively to the divine protection with a certain devout affection of the heart, and a pious turning of our thoughts towards Him from Whom is the best gift and the perfect gift (James i. 17) : a death "precious in the sight of the Lord" and a happy consummation.

We find the same three things in the Gospel, recommended to us by the Lord Himself in His sermon on the mount : "Blessed are the poor in spirit," He said, "blessed are the meek, blessed are they that mourn" (Matt. v. 3-5). That is, blessed are they that relish the good things in store and from the desire of the goods of heaven reject with the interior palate of the mind the goods of this world ; blessed are they that "provide for their last end," they that "with meekness receive the ingrafted word which is able to save their souls" (James i. 21), and with pious affection of heart tend towards the promised inheritance ; blessed are they that, understanding the errors of the past, water their couches with their penitent tears (Ps. vi. 7). Do you not see now what it is the holy man prays for, what he desires to obtain for those for whom he intercedes ? "Oh, that they would be wise," he exclaims, "and would understand, and would provide for their last end!" As if he should say in plainer language : "Would to God they had the spirit of wisdom, and the spirit of understanding, and the spirit of counsel"! And would to God we ourselves, dearest brethren, had

the same, so that by wisdom we might in the present "order all things sweetly" (Wisdom viii. 1), by understanding condemn ourselves for the sins of the past, and by counsel make provision for the future. Would to God we had wisdom to direct us in the present, understanding to repair the past, and counsel with a devout trust in God whereby, through His mercy, we might so provide as to have at length a happy consummation. For this is the "triple cord" (Eccles. iv. 12) by which we are drawn to salvation: a well-regulated life, sound judgment, and a confidence full of devotion.

THIRD SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF SS. PETER AND PAUL.

On the two Classes of Sinners, and on the Motives for Confidence to be found in the Conversion of the two great Apostles.

" These were men of mercy whose justices have not been forgotten : good things continue with their seed : their posterity are a holy inheritance."—Ecclus. xliv. 10-12.

Not without good reason, my brethren, does Mother Church apply to the holy apostles what is said in the Book of Wisdom, " These were men of mercy whose justices have not been forgotten : good things continue with their seed "(Ecclus. xliv. 10, 11, juxta LXX). For " men of mercy " they are in truth, whether in the sense that they have obtained mercy, or in the sense that they are full of mercy, or in the sense that they have been given to us through the mercy of God. See how they obtained mercy. Inquire of Paul concerning himself, or rather listen to his spontaneous acknowledgment, where he says, " I was before a blasphemer and a persecutor and contumelious, but I obtained the mercy of God " (1 Tim. i. 13). Who indeed has not heard what sufferings he inflicted on the saints in Jerusalem? And not alone in Jerusalem but throughout all Judaea did he rage with unbridled fury, burning to rend the members of Christ " that are upon the earth " (Col. iii. 5). Under the influence of this madness, he set forth for Damascus, but was prevented from his purpose by the grace of God. He set forth, " breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of

the Lord " (Acts ix. 1), and of a sudden became himself a disciple of the Lord, a disciple to whom the Lord was to show " how great things he should suffer for His name's sake " (ibid. 16). He set forth exuding deadly poison from his whole person and in an instant was changed into " a vessel of election " (ibid. 15), so that his " heart eructated the good word " (Ps. xliv. 1), " Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ? " (Acts ix. 6). Undoubtedly, " this was the change of the right hand of the Most High " (Ps. lxxvi. 11). And Saul assuredly had reason to say, " A faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation : that Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners of whom I am the chief " (1 Tim. i. 15). Dearest brethren, let the example of the blessed Paul give you confidence and consolation, so that, being now converted to the Lord, you may no longer be excessively tormented by the consciousness of your past sins, but only humbled, as was he when he said, " I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God " (1 Cor. xv. 9). Yes, dearest brethren, so " be you humbled under the mighty hand of God " (1 Peter v. 6), and be of good cheer, for you also have obtained mercy, you also have been washed from your sins and sanctified (1 Cor. vi. 11). St. Paul's example is a source of comfort to us all, because we " all have sinned and do need the glory of God " (Rom. iii. 23).

But I have another example to propose to you, not in the person of St. Paul, however, but in St. Peter, one more precious than the preceding, because one more rare, and as sublime as it is singular. Paul sinned, no doubt, yet he " did it ignorantly in

unbelief" (1 Tim. i. 13). Peter, on the contrary, sinned with his eyes wide open. Furthermore, "where sin abounded, grace did more abound" (Rom. v. 20). For with regard to those who fall before they have knowledge of God, before they have experience of His tender mercies, before they have borne His sweet yoke and His light burden (Matt. xi. 30), before they have received the grace of devotion and the consolation of the Holy Spirit: with regard to such, I say, there is "a plentiful redemption" (Ps. cxxix.7). And to this class, my brethren, we all of us belong. But there is a second class of sinners, of whom only very few, as you will find, recover the state of grace, whilst the others, already filthy, "become filthier still" (Apoc. xxii. 11). It is over these the Prophet makes his lament: "How is the gold become dim, the finest colour changed? . . . They that were brought up in scarlet have embraced the dung" (Jer. Lam. iv. 5).

Nevertheless, we ought not to despair even of such as these, provided they are willing to rise again and at once from their fall. For the longer they delay the more difficult they shall find it to recover. "Blessed is he that shall take and dash thy little ones, O Babylon, against the rock" (Ps. cxxxvi. 9): because if they are allowed time to grow strong, it will be very hard to master them. "My little children, these things I say to you that you may not sin: but if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Just" (1 John ii. 1), Who is able to do what is quite impossible to us: only let not him that has fallen add to his first fall the evil of a second and greater fall, but rather an immediate resurrection (Ps. xl. 9), firmly trusting

that he shall not be refused pardon if only hec onfesses his fault with sincere sorrow. For if he of whom I am now speaking, the Apostle Peter, attained to such a height of sanctity after so terrible a fall, who can any longer despair of forgiveness, provided he has the good will to forsake his sins ? Consider what the Evangelist says of Peter after his fall : " And going forth, he wept bitterly " (Matt. xxvi. 75). Recognise in the going forth the confession of the mouth, and compunction of heart in the bitter weeping. Consider also that it was then for the first time " he remembered the word of Jesus " (ibid.), that it was then for the first time the word which predicted his fall gained access to his heart, when his presumptuous temerity was at last driven out. Woe to thee, who, after falling, showest thyself to us more obstinate than ever ! Why wouldst thou be so unyielding unto thine own destruction ? Rather oughtest thou to bend in order the better to be lifted up, and that which has been twisted out of shape thou shouldst suffer to be broken so that then it may be the more perfectly put right again. Wherefore art thou indignant with the cock for reproving thee ? It is rather against thyself thine indignation should be kindled. " Thou shalt set aside for thine inheritance,"sings the Psalmist, " a free rain, O God, and it was weakened " (Ps. lxvii. 10). O happy weakness, which is " set aside for the inheritance," and which does not repel the physician's hand ! With regard to the obdurate, " with a rod of iron," says the Prophet, addressing God, " Thou shalt break them in pieces like a potter's vessel " (Ps. ii. 9) ; whilst as for the inheritance, that is to say, the elect: " it was weakened, but Thou, O Lord, hast made it perfect " (Ps. lxvii. 10).

Dearest brethren, you have now heard what mercy our two apostles obtained, so that none of you ought henceforth to be unduly troubled at the thought of his past transgressions, sorrowing over them upon the bed of his conscience (Ps. iv. 5). Why should he? It may be thou hast sinned, my brother, whilst living in the world: but hast thou sinned more grievously than St. Paul? I will even suppose thou hast sinned after coming to religion: but was thy sin more heinous than the sin of St. Peter? Now, both of these, by devoting themselves to penance with all their hearts, attained not only to salvation, but even to high sanctity, yea, they were commissioned to minister to the salvation of others and to teach the rules of perfection. Therefore, "go and do thou in like manner" (Luke x. 37). For it is to encourage thee that the Scripture speaks of them as "men of mercy," because, namely, of the greatness of the mercy which they merited to receive.

It is possible, however, as I said before, to understand this phrase in two other senses. The apostles can, without impropriety, be called "men of mercy," either because they are full of mercy or because they have been mercifully bestowed upon the universal Church. For we know that these men neither lived for themselves nor died for themselves "but unto Him Who died for them" (2 Cor. v. 15), or rather they lived and died for the sake of us all from love to Him. Oh, how much shall not their justice profit us, if even their sins have helped us so! Their life, their doctrine, even their death, have all conduced to our advantage; for by their conduct they have taught us continence, by their preaching they have taught us wisdom, and by their sufferings patience. There is a fourth benefit,

which even to this day these "men of mercy" have not ceased to confer upon us, I mean the fruit of their holy prayers. And if you examine their lives, you will find yet another benefit to be added to our list in the confidence which they inspire us with by working so many miracles. And who shall enumerate all the favours we have received through their intercession? Well, therefore, does Holy Scripture say of them, "These were men of mercy," adding "whose justices have not been forgotten."

Do you desire, dearest brethren, that your own justices also may not be forgotten? If so, be on your guard against a threefold danger, and they shall flourish for ever before the Lord. You have read the words, "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will begin to vomit thee out of My mouth" (Apoc. iii. 16). You have read these also, "If the just man turn himself away from his justice, and do iniquity according to all the abominations which the wicked man useth to work, shall he live? All his justices which he had done shall not be remembered: in the prevarication by which he hath prevaricated and in the sin which he hath committed: in them he shall die" (Ez. xviii. 24). And you have read the answer that shall be given to some at the judgment: "I never knew you" (Matt. vii. 23), to such, doubtless, as shall have already received their reward (Matt. vi. 2). Consequently, every justice that is tepid, every justice that is inconstant, every justice that is requited in this world, shall be forgotten before God. This was not the case with the justices of the apostles, as appears evident from what follows in my text: "Good things continue with their seed." For even to our own time their footprints remain amongst us, and the religion which they

preached, being from God, can never be destroyed. We read that the very clothes worn by the Israelites in the desert were preserved intact for the space of forty years (Deut. viii. 4) : with how much greater reason have the apostolic garments, laid upon the Saviour's beast of burden, been preserved from the injuries of time ! " Good things continue with their seed," says the Wise Man. Now, what are we to understand by " their seed," because he immediately adds, " Their nephews* are a holy inheritance " (Ecclus. xliv. 12) ? Evidently " their seed " and " their nephews " signify the same. You remember, my brethren (for you to whom I speak are well acquainted with the law) : you remember, I say, that legal prescription requiring a surviving brother to raise up seed to his brother who died without children (Gen. xxxviii. 8, Deut. xxv. 5). Now, who is he that died without children ? Listen : " I am alone," says Christ by His Prophet, " until I pass " (Ps. cxl. 10). And so after His resurrection He said to Mary Magdalen, " Go to My brethren and tell them, etc." (John xx. 17). As if He should say, " They are My brethren : tell them to do for Me what brothers are bound to do for a brother that dies leaving no seed." Therefore the apostles have begotten us by the Gospel (1 Cor. iv. 15), not for themselves, however, but for Christ, because by the Gospel of Christ. Hence it was that St. Paul was displeased to find some of the early Christians calling themselves after those who had begotten them by the Gospel ; and he severely rebuked such as were saying, " I indeed am of Paul,

* " Nepotes." The Douay Translators render this " posterity," but St. Bernard's drift requires us to keep to the more usual signification—(Translator).

and I am of Apollo, and I am of Cephas," because he desired that all should be and should be called " of Christ " (1 Cor. i. 12). Therefore, we, my brethren, are in truth the seed of the apostles as having been converted by their preaching ; but by adoption and by our right to a participation in the inheritance we are the seed of Christ and the nephews of Christ's brothers, the holy apostles.

FIRST SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

On the Reception of the Son by the Mother in the Incarnation and of the Mother by the Son in the Assumption.

"Now it came to pass that He entered into a certain citadel and a certain woman received Him into her house."—Luke x. 38.

To-day, dearest brethren, the glorious Virgin ascended to heaven, bringing with her, doubtless, to the inhabitants of the holy city an abundant augmentation of their ecstatic joys. For she it is the voice of whose salutation of yore caused an infant, as yet enclosed in his mother's womb, to leap from an excess of gladness (Luke i. 41). Now, if the soul of a babe unborn melted with tenderness when Mary spoke (Cant. v. 6), what, think you, must have been the exultation of those celestial spirits when they deserved to hear her voice and to see her face and to rejoice in her blissful presence? And with regard to ourselves, most dearly beloved, how deservedly do we keep the feast of her Assumption with all solemnity! What reasons for rejoicing, what motives for exultation have we not on this most beautiful day! The presence of Mary illumines the entire world, so that even the holy city above has now a more dazzling splendour from the light of this virginal Lamp. With good reason, therefore, do "thanksgiving and the voice of praise" (Is. li. 3) resound to-day through the courts of heaven. But it seems that we have as much cause

for lamentation as the angels have for joy. For if heaven overflows with gladness from Mary's presence, does it not seem to follow that this lower world has equal cause to grieve for her absence? But let us cease to complain, because we also "have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come" (Heb. xiii. 14), the same which the blessed Mary entered to-day. And if we are true citizens of that heavenly Jerusalem, we ought certainly to remember it even in our exile, even "upon the rivers of Babylon" (Ps. cxxxvi. 1) we ought to communicate in its gladness and to share in its joys, above all in that which to-day with a mighty stream "maketh the city of God joyful" (Ps. xlv. 5), so that we, even we, may catch some of the "drops that fall upon the earth" (Ps. lxxi. 6). Our great Queen has gone on before us, she has gone on, I say, and has been gloriously received, so gloriously that we, her poor servants, walk with confidence after our Lady, crying out to her, "Draw us: we will run after thee to the odour of thy ointments" (Cant. i. 3). Our exiled race has sent home an Advocate, who, being the Mother of the Judge and also the Mother of mercy, will be sure to advance the cause of our salvation, humbly, indeed, yet not less efficaciously.

To-day, then, most dearly beloved, this earth of ours sends up a most beautiful gift to heaven, so that by the kind intercourse of mutual giving and receiving the human order and the divine, the earthly and the heavenly, the lowest and the highest, may be bound together in a sweet alliance of holy friendship. For thither ascends "the high fruit of the earth" (Is. iv. 2), and thence comes down the best gifts and the perfect gifts (James i. 17). Therefore, "ascending on high,"

the holy Virgin, like her Divine Son, will "give gifts to men" (Ephes. iv. 8). Who can doubt it, since she shall have both the power and the good-will? She is the Queen of heaven, she is the Queen of mercy, and she is also the Mother of the only-begotten Son of God--a title which more than anything else commends to us the greatness of her power and her loving-kindness: unless perchance there be someone who does not believe that the Son of the Most High honours His Mother, or who hesitates to believe that the very vitals of Mary "have passed into the affection" (Ps. lxxii. 7) of charity, in consequence of having been the home wherein for nine months the "Charity That is of God" (1 John iv. 7) "dwelt corporally" (Col. ii. 9).

It is for your consolation, dearest brethren, I have made these remarks, because I know how difficult it is to discover in such spiritual poverty as ours that perfect charity which "seeketh not her own" (1 Cor. xiii. 5). But without speaking at all of the many benefits resulting to ourselves from her glorification, if we love her in truth, we ought to be glad because she goes to her Son (John xiv. 28). Yes, I repeat, we ought to rejoice with her, for otherwise, which God forbid!—we should be found utterly ungrateful to the Finder of grace (Luke i. 30). We ought to rejoice with her, because to-day she is received at her entrance into the holy city by Him Who was received by her at His entrance into the citadel (*castellum*) of this world. And oh! with how much honour is she received and welcomed! with what exultation! with what glory! There was not upon earth a worthier place than the temple of her own most blessed womb, into which Mary might receive the Son of God; nor is there in heaven a more

honourable seat than the royal throne upon which to-day Mary has been exalted by Mary's Son. Full of bliss must be pronounced both receptions, viz., that of the Son by the Mother and that of the Mother by the Son, and ineffable both, because both inconceivable. For why do we read to-day throughout the whole Church of Christ that Gospel lesson which tells how a woman, blessed among women, received the Saviour into her house? * (Luke x. 38-42). In my opinion, the purpose is to enable us from that reception to form some kind of estimate of this which we are now commemorating, or rather to help us to such a realisation as is possible of the inestimable glory of the second by comparison with the inestimable glory of the first. Who indeed, even though he could "speak with the tongues of men and of angels" (1 Cor. xiii. 1), is competent to explain how, by the descent of the Holy Ghost and the overshadowing of the Father's power (Luke i. 35), "the Word was made Flesh" (John i. 14), the Word by Whom all things were made (ibid. 3)? how the Lord of Majesty, Whom the whole created universe cannot contain (2 Par. vi. 18) was enclosed, made man, within the Virgin's womb?

And who is able even to conceive with what splendour the glorious Queen of the universe mounted heavenwards to-day; with what mighty ardour of tenderest affection the whole multitude of the heavenly legions issued forth to meet her and to escort her to the seat of glory; with what serenity of countenance, with what loving looks, with what joyous embraces she

* The holy preacher is taking here, in an accommodated sense, Luke x. 38, as the Church does also by appointing this Gospel to be read on the Feast of the Assumption.—(Translator.)

was welcomed by her Son and lifted high above every creature to that eminence of honour which becomes so great a Mother and is worthy of so great a Son! Happy, doubtless, were the kisses which the Mother received from the lips of her suckling Babe whilst she fondled Him on her virginal lap. But ought we not to regard as still happier those which He gives her to-day in loving salutation from His seat at the Father's right hand, when she advances to the throne of Majesty, singing her epithalamium and saying, with the Spouse in the Canticle, "Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His mouth" (Cant. i. 1)? "Who shall declare the generation" (Is. liii. 8) of Christ? Who shall declare the Assumption of Mary? For the glory wherewith she is crowned in heaven is as singular as the grace she found upon earth was incomparable. If "eye hath not seen nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Cor. ii. 9): who can say or conceive what He hath prepared for her that bore Him and that loves Him—which no one doubts—with a love unparalleled? Oh, happy in truth is Mary and doubly happy in that she has both received the Saviour and has been received by the Saviour. In both these signal honours the dignity of the Virgin Mother appears to us equally admirable, in both the condescension of the Divine Majesty appears equally worthy of praise.

"Now it came to pass," says the Evangelist, "that He, namely, Jesus, entered into a certain citadel and a certain woman received Him into her house."

But let us break off here and occupy ourselves rather with singing the praises of God, for this is a feast which ought to be celebrated, not so much with sermons or

pious exhortations, as with uninterrupted canticles of joy and thanksgiving. But inasmuch as the Gospel text just quoted contains abundance of matter for another discourse, to-morrow we shall again assemble here, and I shall communicate to you ungrudgingly whatsoever lights may be vouchsafed to me thereupon ; so that whilst we occupy our minds with the thought of so great a Virgin, the feeling of devotion may be awakened within us and we may receive the grace to correct what is defective in our conduct and to begin a better life, unto the praise and glory of Mary's Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

SECOND SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION.

How the Spiritual House has to be swept and garnished for the Reception of Christ.

"Now it came to pass that He entered into a certain citadel and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister named Mary, who sitting also at the Lord's feet heard His word. But Martha was busy about much serving."—Luke x. 38-40.

"Now it came to pass that He entered into a certain citadel and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house" (Luke x. 38). It appears to me that I cannot do better than to subjoin to this the exclamation of the Prophet: "O Israel, how great is the house of God, and how vast is the place of His possession!" (Bar. iii. 24). Vast beyond a doubt must that place be, in comparison with which this most spacious earth of ours is called a citadel. Do you not agree, brethren, that that land must be very vast, that country inconceivably great, since the Saviour, issuing forth therefrom and coming down to this lower world, is said to enter into a citadel? Or does anyone doubt that the citadel of which the Evangelist makes mention is nothing else but the court of "the strong man armed" (Luke xi. 21), "the prince of this world" (John xiv. 30), upon whom a Stronger came and robbed him of his goods (Mark iii. 27)? Dearest brethren, let us hasten to enter into that spacious abode of beatitude where there is room enough for all and no man presses on another, so that we "may be able to com-

prehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth" (Eph. iii. 18) of the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem. There is no reason why we should despair of being admitted into that celestial city, since the King thereof, Who is also its Creator, has not disdained to come into this narrow citadel of our earthly home.

But why do I say that He entered into the citadel? He condescended to do much more: He even entered the close prison of a Virgin's womb. For so the Evangelist says: "A certain woman received Him into her house." O happy woman, who was found worthy to receive not the spies sent to Jericho (Josue ii. 1), but the most mighty Despoiler of that fool who indeed "is changed as the moon" (Ecclus. xxvii. 12); not the emissaries of "Jesus the son of Nave" (Ecclus. xlvi. 1), but the true Jesus Himself, the Son of God. Happy, I say, is the woman whose house at the coming of the Saviour, was found "swept and garnished" indeed, but by no means "empty" (Matt. xxii. 44). For how can she be called empty whom the Archangel saluted as "full of grace" (Luke i. 22)? And not only that, but he also declared that the Holy Ghost was to come upon her (ibid. 35). To what purpose, think you, if it be not to fill her to overflowing? To what purpose, I repeat, except that, being filled in herself by His first coming, she might be made to superabound and overflow unto us by His second? Would to God those spiritual spices, those precious gifts of grace were poured out upon us, so that of so great a fulness we might all receive! (John i. 16). For Mary is our Mediatrix; she it is through whom "we have received Thy mercy, O God" (Ps. xlvii. 10);

she it is through whom we have received the Lord Jesus into our houses. My brethren, we have each of us his own house and each of us his own citadel. Divine Wisdom knocks at our several doors; "it any man shall hear His voice and open to Him the door, He will come into him and will sup with him" (Apoc. iii. 20). It is a common saying, one that is often enough in the mouths of men, but more often still in their hearts: He that takes good care of his body guards a noble citadel. But such is not the language of the Wise Man; he rather counsels: "With all watchfulness keep thy heart, because life issueth out from it" (Prov. iv. 23).

Let us yield this point, however, and let us say with the multitude: He that takes good care of his body, guards a noble citadel. But it remains to be asked: in what way are we to guard this noble citadel? Does it seem to you, my brethren, that that soul has guarded the citadel of her body as she ought, whose members she has suffered to conspire, so to speak, and to hand over to the enemy the possession thereof? For there are some who "have entered into a league with death and have made a covenant with hell" (Is. xxviii. 15). "The beloved one," says Moses, "grew fat and kicked, he grew fat and thick and gross" (Deut. xxxii. 15). Such, doubtless, is the manner of guarding the body which is praised by the sinner in the desires of his flesh (Ps. x. 111, juxta Heb.). What think you, brethren? Ought we to yield to the multitude in this matter as well? God forbid! Let us rather interrogate Paul, that most strenuous leader in the spiritual combat. Tell us, then, O blessed Apostle, how thou guardest the citadel of thy body. "I so

run," he says, " not as at an uncertainty ; I so fight, not as one beating the air. For I chastise my body and bring it into subjection, lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a cast-away " (1 Cor. ix. 26, 27). And in another place he writes, " Let not sin reign in your mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof " (Rom. vi. 12). This beyond doubt is a useful custody, and happy the soul that thus guards her body so that the enemy may never claim it for his own. There was a time when the wicked one had subjected this citadel of mine to his tyrannic sway, ruling its members with the authority of a master.* Its present desolation and misery bear witness still to the severity of its sufferings during that period. Alas ! there is left in it neither the wall of continence nor the bulwark of patience (Jer. Lam. ii. 8). The cruel oppressor " hath laid waste the vine-yard " (Ps. lxxix. 14), cut down the corn, and rooted up the fruit trees. At his instigation, even " mine eye hath wasted my soul " (Jer. Lam. iii. 51), so that " unless the Lord had been my helper, my soul had almost dwelt in hell " (Ps. xciii. 17) : I speak of the " lower hell " (Ps. lxxxv. 13) where no one shall confess to Him (Ps. vi. 6) and out of which there is no deliverance.

But even as it was, my soul was not without a hell and a prison-house. For having been made captive at the very beginning of this detestable conspiracy and betrayal, she was confined and guarded as a prisoner

* This and what follows must not be taken literally, but only as one of those pious exaggerations to which the saints are often prone. St. Bernard, according to all his biographers, lived a most innocent life from the cradle and probably never lost his baptismal innocence.—(Translator.)

in her own house, whilst the jailers assigned to her were none other than the members of her household. Her conscience became her prison, and her torturers her reason and her memory, cruel torturers indeed, harsh and pitiless, but far less terrible than the lions "roaring, ready to devour" (Ecclus. li. 4) to which she was on the point of being abandoned. "Blessed be the Lord Who hath not given me to be a prey to their teeth" (Ps. cxxiii. 6). Yes, "blessed be the Lord God of Israel because He hath visited and wrought the redemption" (Luke i. 68) of my soul. For whilst the malignant one was preparing to thrust her down into the "lower hell" and designing to burn the citadel itself with everlasting flames, so that the bodily members also should be punished as their perfidy deserved: there appeared upon the scene a Mightier than he. Jesus "entered into the citadel," and "first binding the strong man, robbed him of his goods" (Mark iii. 27), so that He might "make unto honour" the vessels that were "unto dishonour" (Rom. ix. 21). "He hath broken the gates of brass and burst the iron bars" (Ps. cvi. 16), and "brought forth the captive out of prison" (Is. lii. 7) and out of the shadow of death" (Ps. cvi. 10). Now it is only through confession such a captive can be delivered. Confession is the broom, so to speak, by means of which the prison-house puts off its forbidding aspect and reassumes its former home-like appearance, being first "swept, and garnished" (Matt. xii. 44) afterwards with the beautiful green rushes of regular observances. The woman has now a home, she has now a place for the entertainment of Him to Whom she is so deeply indebted by reason of countless favours bestowed. Woe to her if

she refuses to receive Him, if she neglects to detain Him, if she does not constrain Him to stay with her, " because it is towards evening " (Luke xxiv. 29) For he that has been driven forth shall find on his return the house " swept and garnished " indeed, but without an occupant. Then shall he go and, taking with him seven other spirits worse than himself, entering in he shall dwell there (Matt. xii. 45).

Thus, dearest brethren, her house is " left desolate " (Matt. xxiii. 38) to the soul that neglects to make it worthy of the Saviour's presence. But you may desire to know how this can be. Is it possible, you may feel inclined to ask, that a house " swept " by confession of past sins and " garnished " with regular observance should nevertheless be reputed unworthy to be inhabited by heavenly grace or to be entered by the Saviour ? Most certainly, my brethren, it is possible, if only the exterior parts of the house have been swept clean and adorned, as I have said, with the green rushes of faithful discipline, whilst all within is covered with filth. Surely no one believes that the Lord can be worthily entertained in the " whited sepulchres " of the dead, " which outwardly appear to men beautiful but within are full of all filthiness " (Matt. xxiii. 27) and corruption. I allow that occasionally, allured as it were by the attractive appearance of the outside, He begins to enter, and has already, so to speak, one foot on the threshold, by the bestowal of some first grace of divine visitation : but does He not immediately withdraw in anger ? Does He not at once take flight, exclaiming "I have stuck fast in the mire of the deep and there is here nothing solid " (Ps. lxviii 3). That is, there is no true and solid virtue but only an

appearance, a quality as it were without a substance. But the thin varnish of an externally virtuous life affords no firm footing for the entrance of Christ, Who penetrates all things and desires to make His dwelling in the very centre of the heart. We are told that the Spirit of discipline "will not dwell in a body manifestly subject to sins" (Wisdom i. 4); but He will not alone avoid, He will flee and remove Himself far from the body where sins lie concealed, covered with the simulation of virtue. What else is that but a detestable simulation, if, instead of plucking up vice by the roots within, we content ourselves with pruning it on the exterior? Oh, be sure it will sprout again more abundantly than before; be sure the malicious tenant that has been expelled will come back again "with seven other spirits more wicked than himself" (Matt. xii. 45) and re-enter the house, "finding it swept and garnished" indeed, yet "empty." For "the dog that returneth to his vomit" (Prov. xxvi. 11) becomes more hateful than ever; and he is made "a child of hell" (Matt. xxiii. 15) many times worse than before, whosoever, after obtaining the pardon of his sins, falls back into the same, like "the sow that was washed wallowing again in the mire" (2 Peter ii. 20).

Brethren, do you wish to behold a house that is "swept and garnished" but "empty"? Look at that man who has confessed and renounced "sins manifest, going before to judgment" (1 Tim. v. 24), and who now applies nothing but his hands to the works of justice, going through every spiritual exercise with a heart devoid of all devotion and merely from custom, as the "heifer of Ephraim, taught to love to tread out the corn" (Osee x. 11). With regard to

exterior observances which are " profitable to little " (1 Tim. iv. 8), he passes over not " one jot or one tittle " (Matt. v. 18), although whilst " straining out a gnat he swallows a camel " (Matt. xxiii. 24). For in his heart he is the slave of self-will, of avarice, of vainglory, of ambition, fostering secretly, if not all these vices together, at least each of them in turn. And so " iniquity lieth to itself " (Ps. xxvi. 12), although " God is not deceived " (Gal. vi. 7). For you may sometimes see a man so perfectly tricked out in the colours of virtues as to deceive even himself, not noticing the worm that devours his vitals. He considers everything secure because the fair exterior is still preserved. In the words of the Prophet, " Strangers have devoured his strength and he hath not known " (Osee vii. 9). He says to himself, " I am rich, and made wealthy and have need of nothing," whereas he is " wretched and miserable, and poor " (Apoc. iii. 17). Yes, and given the due conditions you shall see the corrupted matter, now concealed, welling out from the festering sore, and the tree that has been pruned but not uprooted sending out new branches in greater abundance than ever. Dearest brethren, if we would avoid this danger, let us lay the axe, not to the branches, but to the root of the trees (Matt. iii. 10). Let there be found in us not only " bodily exercise " which by itself " is profitable to little " (1 Tim. iv. 8), but " piety " also, which " is profitable to all things " (ibid.), and the practice of solid virtue.

" A certain woman," says the Evangelist, " named Martha, received Him into her house ; and she had a sister called Mary." Martha and Mary are sisters and so, like good sisters, should live under the same roof.

The former is "busy with much serving," the latter attends exclusively to the words of Christ (ibid. 39, 40). To Martha appertains the "garnishing" of the house, to Mary the filling thereof, so that it shall not be found "empty": for her time is left vacant to attend to the Lord that the house itself may not be left vacant by Him. But, brethren, to whom can we assign the sweeping? For if we are able to discover someone for this, the house into which the Saviour is received shall be found "swept and garnished" in truth yet not "empty." Suppose, then, we give the broom to Lazarus, that is, unless you have something better to suggest. Being a brother to the two sisters, he has a right to share their home. I am speaking, observe, of that Lazarus who, after he had been four days in the tomb and was already corrupted, was awakened from the dead by "the voice of power" (Ps. lxvii. 34). He can therefore be considered without the least impropriety as the type of holy penitence. We may suppose, then, that the Saviour will enter and visit often that house which is swept by the penitent Lazarus, which is garnished by the busy Martha, and filled by the reposeful Mary whilst she occupies herself with the contemplation of spiritual things.

But perchance someone, piously curious, is anxious to know why it is that in this Gospel lesson there is no mention at all of Lazarus? To my mind, this omission is quite in accord with the mystical interpretation I have just proposed to you. For the Holy Spirit, intending that we should understand the house of our Gospel to be Mary's virginal soul, avoids, as is only becoming, any allusion to penitence which presupposes sin. God forbid that this house should be

said to have ever had any such defilement of its own so as to need the broom of Lazarus! Even supposing that the Virgin inherited the original stain from her parents,* Christian piety will not allow us to believe that she was less sanctified in the womb than was the Prophet Jeremias (Jer. i. 5) or less filled with the Holy Ghost than the Baptist (Luke i. 44). Besides, had she not been born holy, her birthday would not be honoured throughout the universal Church with such joyous festivities. Finally, since there can be no doubt at all that Mary was cleansed from the inherited defilement by grace alone—just as it is by grace alone that stain is now washed away in the sacrament of baptism, whilst with the "knives of stone" (Josue v. 11) alone it could be removed under the former Dispensation: such being the case, and the holy Virgin being entirely free from personal sin, as we all piously believe, it follows that her most innocent heart could have had no experience of penitence. Therefore, let Lazarus abide with them that have need to "cleanse their conscience from dead works" (Heb. ix. 14); let him dwell with "the wounded sleeping in the sepulchres" (Ps. lxxxvii. 6): but in the Virgin's home let none be found save the sisters Mary and Martha. For did she not act the part of Martha whilst for three months she humbly attended her aged cousin Elizabeth, who was about to become a mother (Luke i. 56)? And she fulfilled the role of Mary when she kept all the words that were said of her Son, "pondering them in her heart" (Luke ii. 19).

* For St. Bernard's attitude towards the doctrine of Mary's Immaculate Conception, cf. Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles vol. i. 253-4; ii. 429 and Passaglia, de Im. Conc. iii. 1820-43.

Let no one be surprised, therefore, that the woman who received the Saviour is called, not Mary, but Martha: because this incomparable Virgin is found to unite in her single self the busy ministrations of Martha and the equally busy repose of Mary. For not only is it said that "all the glory of the King's daughter is within" (Ps. xliv. 14), but likewise that she is "clothed round about with varieties, in golden borders" (ibid.). For the Virgin Mary is not one of the foolish virgins; she is the most prudent of virgins: not only is she possessed of a lamp, but she has oil also in her vessel (Matt. xxv. 2-4). You have not forgotten, I suppose, the Gospel parable which represents the foolish virgins as excluded from the wedding-feast? Now, their house was certainly swept, because they are said to have been virgins; it was garnished too, since we are told that all the virgins together, that is, both the wise and the foolish, trimmed their lamps; but it was empty, for the reason that they had no oil in their lamps. Hence it was that the Heavenly Bridegroom deigned neither to be received by them into their house nor to admit them to the marriage supper in His own. Very different from these was that "valiant woman" (Prov. xxxi. 10) by whom has been crushed the serpent's head (Gen. iii. 15). For amongst the many eulogies pronounced upon her by the Wise Man you may read this also: "Her lamp shall not be put out in the night" (Prov. xxxi. 18). This has been said as a reproach to the foolish virgins, who, when the Bridegroom came at midnight, began to lament all too late that their lamps had gone out (Matt. xxv. 8). But our glorious Virgin advanced to meet Him with her lamp alight and burning so brightly as to astonish the

very angels of light (2 Cor. xi. 14), causing them to exclaim, "Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array?" (Cant. vi. 9). For Mary surpasses in splendour all other creatures, being anointed and filled with the oil of grace above her fellows (Ps. xliv. 8) by Him Who is the Author of grace, Jesus Christ, her Son and our Lord.

THIRD SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION.

On the Different Employments of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus.

"Martha, Martha, thou art careful and art troubled about many things. But one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her."—Luke x. 41, 42.

Jesus "entered into a certain citadel, and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house" (Luke x. 38). How is it, my brethren, that of the two sisters only one is said to have received the Saviour, and she the lesser of the two? For we know from the testimony of Him Whom Martha received that "Mary hath chosen the best part" (ibid. 42). Martha, however, seems to have been the elder, and, as is obvious enough, the beginning of salvation belongs rather to action than to contemplation. Christ praises Mary, but it is Martha who receives Him. So of old Jacob loved his Rachel, but during the night her sister Lia was put in her place without his perceiving it; and when he complained of the fraud practised upon him, he was informed that "it is not the custom to give the younger in marriage first" (Gen. xxix. 24-26). Now, if you consider that the house here in question is an earthly house, you will easily understand why it was Martha and not Mary who received the Lord into it. It was to Martha rather than to Mary the Apostle addressed himself when he said, "Glorify and bear

God in your body" (1 Cor. vi. 20). For the former employs the body as a means of well-doing, whereas to the latter it is more a hindrance than a help. This is what we read in Wisdom: "The corruptible body is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation presseth down the mind that museth upon many things" (Wisdom ix. 15). Yes, it "presseth down the mind that museth," but not the mind that is busy about exterior ministrations. On earth, therefore, it is Martha who receives the Saviour into her house, whilst Mary considers rather how she may be received by Him into that "house not made with hands, eternal in heaven" (2 Cor. v. 1). Perhaps, however, she also can be said to receive Him into her house, but in a spiritual sense: for the Lord is a Spirit (John iv. 24).

"And she—that is to say, Martha—had a sister named Mary, who sitting also at the Lord's feet, heard His word." You observe how the Saviour was received by both sisters, by the one in His bodily presence, by the other in His speech. "But Martha was busy about much serving. Who stood and said: Lord, hast Thou no care that my sister hath left me alone to serve?" Brethren, are we to suppose that the sound of murmuring is heard in the house where Christ is entertained? Oh, happy the house, blessed for ever the community in which Martha has reason to complain thus of Mary! But, on the other hand, it would certainly be shameful and even sinful on the part of Mary to envy Martha. For where in the Gospel do we find Mary complaining of Martha and saying to the Lord, "My sister hath left me alone in the enjoyment of contemplative repose"? God forbid it, my dearest brethren, God forbid it, I say, that he who has ample

leisure for prayer should ever wish to exchange his lot for the distracted life led by such members of the community as have to busy themselves about external things! For Martha, indeed, it would be well that she should always seem to herself insufficient and unsuited for the task assigned her and should desire to see the office she holds transferred to some other. "But the Lord answering said to her: Martha, Martha, thou art careful and art troubled about many things." See what a prerogative is Mary's! What an apologist she has against all kinds of censors! If the Pharisee becomes indignant (Luke vii. 39), if Martha complains, if the disciples murmur (Matt. xxvi. 8): Mary always holds her peace and Christ takes it upon Him to defend her. "Mary hath chosen the best part," says He, "which shall not be taken away from her" for ever. This is the "one thing that is necessary"; this is the one thing that the Prophet prayed for so earnestly, as he tells us in the psalm, "One thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I seek after" (Ps. xxvi. 4).

But, my brethren, how are we to understand these words of the Lord: "Mary hath chosen the best part"? For if her part be the more excellent, what truth is there in the answer we are accustomed to make whenever we find her disposed to regard as iniquity the bustling solicitude of the busy Martha: "Better is the iniquity of a man than a woman doing a good turn" (Ecclus. xlii. 14)? Or what meaning can there be in the Saviour's words: "If any man minister to Me, him will My Father honour" (John xii. 26), "Whosoever will be the greater among you, let him be your minister" (Matt. xx. 26)? Or lastly, what comfort can it be for the toiling Martha to hear herself reproved in the

praises bestowed upon her leisured sister? It seems to me, consequently, that we must adopt one or other of two interpretations: either say that Mary is commended for choosing the contemplative life, as in itself the better part, so that, in as far as it depends upon us, we should all make the same choice; or that she is praised for her detachment, in neither refusing nor over-eagerly embracing either part but showing herself ready to obey in all things the will of her Lord. For "who is so faithful as David, going out and coming in and proceeding in all things according to the King's command?" (1 Kings xxii. 14). Hence he says in one of his psalms, "My heart is ready, O Lord, my heart is ready" (Ps. lvi. 8), ready, that is, for either one part or the other; ready to enjoy Thee in peaceful contemplation or to minister to Thee in the person of my neighbour. Here in truth is "the best part which shall not be taken away"; here you have the most excellent of dispositions, which remains always the same no matter to which side it may happen to be summoned. "They that have ministered well," so says the Apostle, "shall purchase to themselves a good degree" (1 Tim. iii. 13). Perhaps they shall purchase a still better degree whosoever shall have devoted themselves well to the prayer of God. But the best degree shall undoubtedly be assigned to such as shall have attained to perfection in both the active and the contemplative lives. There is one more remark I should like to make here. I am not sure whether it is permissible to suspect anything such of Martha, but does it not seem to you as if she regarded as idle the sister whom she asked to be given her as a helper? But he that reproves the contemplative soul for her want

of activity is evidently one of the " sensual men " and " perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God " (1 Cor. ii. 14). Let him know, therefore, that this is the best part, which is destined to endure for ever. But as for the soul that has never practised divine contemplation, when she arrives there where this is the one occupation, the one concern, the very life of all, how can she appear otherwise than awkward, so to speak, and out of place ?

But, dearest brethren, let us consider how rightly ordered charity has distributed these three spiritual employments in this house of ours, allotting to Martha the external administration, to Mary interior contemplation, and the practice of penance to Lazarus. It is true, all three occupations are found united in every perfect soul ; nevertheless, different souls seem to be intended more particularly for different functions, some being called to the repose of prayer, others to the exercise of fraternal charity, others again to the practice of penance, " recounting all their years in the bitterness of their soul " (Is. xxxviii. 15), " like the slain sleeping in the sepulchres " (Ps. lxviii. 6). Such a division appears to be plainly necessary, so that Mary's mind may be occupied with loving and lofty sentiments of her God, Martha's with kind and compassionate thoughts of her neighbour, and that the mind of Lazarus may think of nothing but his own misery and abjection. Let each one consider with himself to which of these grades he belongs. " If these three men, Noe, Daniel and Job, shall be found in this city : they shall deliver their own souls by their justice, saith the Lord of Hosts . . . but they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters " (Ezech. xiv. 14-16). I flatter no man.

Would to God I were equally certain that none of you flattered and deceived himself! They to whom no office has been given, no administration entrusted, their part undoubtedly is either to sit with Mary at the feet of Jesus, or else to sit with Lazarus within the sepulchral vault. As for Martha, what wonder is it that she is "troubled about many things," since she has care of many things? But thou that art under no obligation to submit to such distractions, oughtest either not to be troubled at all, but rather to "delight in the Lord" (Ps. xxxvi. 4), or, if that be not yet possible, thou oughtest to be troubled not "about many things," but only about one, that is, about thine own self, like the Psalmist (Ps. xli. 7).

I will repeat what has just been said, so that no one may have the excuse of ignorance: thou, my brother, who hast nothing to do with building the ark of Noe or with piloting the same through the waters of the flood, oughtest to be "a man of desires" as was Daniel (Dan. ix. 23), or like the blessed Job, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity" (Is. cliii. 3). Otherwise, I fear lest, being found lukewarm and nauseous, He should vomit thee out of His mouth, Who desires to find thee either warmed from the consideration of Himself and glowing with the heat of charity, or else humbled and cold from the one thought of thine own misery (Apoc. iii. 16), having "extinguished all the fiery darts of the most wicked one" (Ephes. vi. 16) with the water of holy compunction. But even Martha herself also needs to be admonished that this is especially "required among the dispensers, that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor. iv. 2). Now a dispenser will be faithful if he neither

" seeks the things that are his own, but the things that are Jesus Christ's " (Phil. ii. 21), so that his intention may be pure ; nor does his own will, but the will of his Lord, so that his actions may be rightly ordered. For there are some whose eye is not simple (Matt. vi. 22), and such as these " have received their reward " (ibid. 2). There are others who follow the guidance of their own natural feelings in everything they do, so that whatever they offer appears tainted, their own will being found in all their oblations (Is. lviii. 3). Come with me now, dearest brethren, to the inspired nuptial song, and let us consider how the Heavenly Bridegroom, where He calls to Him His Bride, has neither omitted any of these three occupations nor added to them a fourth. " Arise," He says, " make haste, My friend, My dove, My beautiful one, and come " (Cant. ii. 10). Does she not deserve to be called His friend who, wholly intent on making profit for her Master, carries her fidelity so far as to be willing even to lay down her life for Him ? (John xv. 13). For as often as she interrupts her spiritual exercises in order to minister to one of His least brethren (Matt. xxv. 40), so often does she lay down her life, in a spiritual sense, for His sake. And is she not beautiful who, " beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, is transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord " (2 Cor. iii. 18) ? And is she not a dove who laments and sighs " in the clefts of the rock, in the hollow places of the wall " (Cant. ii. 14), as if buried beneath a sepulchral slab ?

" A certain woman named Martha received Him into her house." It admits of no doubt, dearest brethren, that Martha represents the officials of the monastery,

who are charged, all in the interests of fraternal charity, with the different external administrations. And would to God I myself deserved " to be found faithful among the dispensers " (1 Cor. iv. 2) ! For to whom, I ask, are the words of the Lord : " Martha, Martha, thou art careful " : more evidently applicable than to religious superiors, provided they govern with due solicitude for the welfare of their charge ? And who is " troubled about many things," if not the superior that has to watch over Mary in her contemplative repose and over Lazarus in his exercises of penance and even over them to whose shoulders he has transferred a share of the burden of government ? Behold the " careful " Martha, behold Martha " troubled about many things," in the person of the Apostle who, whilst admonishing prelates of the solicitude required of them, was himself burdened with " solicitude for all the churches " (2 Cor. xi. 28). " Who is weak," he exclaimed, " and I am not weak ? Who is scandalised, and I am not on fire ? " (ibid. 29). Therefore, let Martha receive the Lord into her house, since to her has been entrusted the administration of the house. Martha holds the position of a mediatrix, and it is her business to obtain grace and salvation both for herself and for all committed to her care, according to what is written, " Let the mountains receive peace for the people, and the hills justice " (Ps. lxxii. 3). Let the superior's assistants exercise hospitality towards the Saviour in the manner determined by their office, some being appointed to welcome Him, others to attend Him, others to minister to Him in His members, this one in the sick brethren, that one in the poor, a third in the guests and strangers.

Whilst all these are thus " busy about much serving,"

let Mary see how she shall occupy her leisure, let her " taste and see that the Lord is sweet " (Ps. xxxiii. 9). Let her consider, I say, how with fervour of heart and tranquillity of mind she may sit at the feet of Jesus, " setting Him always in her sight " (Ps. xv. 8) and receiving the words of grace that fall from His mouth, Whose speech is as sweet as His countenance is lovely. For " grace is poured abroad on His lips," and " He is beautiful above the sons of men " (Ps. xliv. 3), yea, beautiful above all the glories of the angelic choirs. Rejoice, then, O Mary, and be thankful too for that thou hast indeed " chosen the best part." Blessed are the eyes that see what thou seest, blessed the ears that deserve to hear what thou hearest. Oh, blessed in truth art thou that " receivest the veins of the divine whisper " (Job iv. 12) in the silence wherewith " it is good for a man to await the salvation of God " (Jer. Lam. iii. 26). Be simple with thy Lord, putting away from thee not alone all guile and simulation, but equally all multiplicity of occupation, so that thou mayest converse freely with Him Whose voice is so sweet and Whose face so comely (Cant. ii. 14). There is one thing against which thou must be on thy guard : thou must not begin to " abound in thine own sense " (Rom. xiv. 5) or wish " to be more wise than it behoveth to be wise " (Rom. xii. 3), lest perchance in pursuing the light thou shouldst fall into darkness, led astray by " the noon-day devil " (Ps. xc. 6), concerning whom this is not the proper time to speak. But what has become of Lazarus ? " Where have you laid him ? " (John xi. 34). I am addressing the sisters who have buried their brother by their preaching and their ministration, by their example and their

prayer. Where then have you laid him ? He is " hidden in the digged earth " (Is. ii. 10), he lies beneath the stone of the sepulchre, it will not be easy to find him. It will not appear improper, therefore, if I reserve to be the subject of my fourth sermon him who " is now of four days " (John xi. 39) ; so that after the Saviour's example on hearing the announcement, " Behold he whom Thou lovest is sick," I also shall rest here for to-day.

FOURTH SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION.

On the Resurrection of Lazarus and on the Dignity and Virtues of Mary.

"When He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice: Lazarus, come forth."—John xi. 43.

Dearest brethren, this is a time when all flesh should shout for joy, because the Mother of the Word made flesh is assumed into heaven; nor should human mortality desist from singing songs of praise on this glorious festival, when the nature of man is elevated in the Virgin to solitary eminence, high above all the orders of immortal spirits. But whilst my devotion to God's blessed Mother will not suffer me to be silent concerning her glories to-day, I feel persuaded, on the other hand, that neither my barren mind can conceive nor my unpolished tongue express anything worthy of so grand a theme. Even the very princes of the heavenly court, contemplating so great a wonder, cannot help crying out in admiration, "Who is she that cometh up from the desert flowing with delights?" (Cant. viii. 5). Which may be paraphrased as follows: "Who is this glorious creature? And how is it that one coming up from the desert of earth overflows with such delights? For delights similar to these cannot be found even amongst ourselves who are made joyful in the city of God by the stream of the river (Ps. xlv. 5), and who are made to drink of the torrent of

pleasure that flows from the vision of glory (Ps. xxxv. 9). Who can she be that thus cometh up flowing with spiritual delights, cometh up from under the sun where there is nothing but labour and sorrow and affliction of spirit? (Eccles. i. 17)." Why may I not call by the name of delights that splendour of virginity united to the gift of fecundity, that loveliness of humility, that "dropping honeycomb" of divine charity (Cant. iv. 11), those "bowels of mercy" (Luke i. 78), that fulness of heavenly grace, that prerogative of singular glory? The Queen of the universe, therefore, going up from the desert, "is become lovely and sweet in her delights," as the Church sings,* even to the holy angels. Nevertheless, let them cease to wonder at the delights found in this our desert, recollecting that, according to what is promised in the psalm, "the Lord hath given goodness and our earth hath yielded her fruit" (Ps. lxxxiv. 13). For why should they wonder to see Mary "going up flowing with delights" from the desert of this earth? Surely there is more reason to wonder at Christ coming down in poverty from the abounding wealth of the heavenly kingdom. For it appears to be a far more astounding thing that the Son of God should be "made a little less than the angels" (Ps. viii. 6), than that the Mother of God should be exalted above the angels. His emptying of Himself has been the filling of us (Phil. ii. 7), His miseries are our delights. For "being rich He became poor for our sakes, that through His poverty we might be made rich" (2 Cor.

* "Speciosa facta es et suavis
In deliciis tuis, sancta Dei Genetrix."

Versicle and responsory used at Lauds and Vespers of this festival as also on other feasts of the Blessed Virgin.—(Translator.)

viii. 9). Yea, even the shame of His cross is become the glory of His disciples (Gal. vi. 14).

But not only did Christ, Who is our Life (Col. iii. 4), empty Himself for our sakes, He even hastened to the sepulchre in order to recall from the dead him that was already "of four days" (John xi. 39); and He sought Lazarus – who, if your charity remembers, is to be according to promise the subject of the sermon to-day — in order to be sought and to be found by Lazarus. For "in this is charity: not as though we had loved God, but because He hath first loved us" (1 John iv. 10). Go, then, O Lord, seek him whom Thou lovest so as to make him also a seeker and a lover. Inquire where they have laid him (John xi. 34): for he lies concealed under the stone, bound and burdened. He lies in the prison-house of his conscience, he is bound with the bands of discipline, he is burdened and oppressed with the heaviness of his penance as with the weight of a superincumbent slab; particularly because he has not yet attained to that charity which is "strong as death" (Cant. viii. 6) and "beareth all things" (1 Cor. xiii. 4). And in this state "he stinketh, for he is now of four days" (John xi. 39). I think the minds of many of you have anticipated my words and already understand whom I am speaking of under the name of Lazarus. Anyhow, the Lazarus I refer to is he who has just recently died to sin (Rom. vi. 2), and has "digged in the wall" of his conscience so that he can see the many "wicked abominations" (Ezech. viii. 8-9) of his corrupt and inscrutable heart; or in the words of another prophet, he has "entered into the rock and hidden in the digged earth from the face of the fury of the Lord" (Is. ii. 10).

But, my brethren, how are we to understand the words, " Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he is now of four days " (John xi. 39) ? For it may be this stench and these days have a deeper signification than appears on the surface. As for me, I take the first day to be the day of holy fear, wherein, our hearts being illuminated, we die to sin and are buried, so to speak, in the sepulchre of our conscience. The second day, so it seems to me, is passed amidst the labours of conflict. For in the beginning of our conversion to God we are wont to be assailed with particular violence by temptations arising from evil habits and can scarcely " extinguish the fiery darts of the most wicked one " (Ephes. vi. 16).* The third day I consider to be the day of sorrow. For it is then one " recounts all his years in the bitterness of his soul " (Is. xxxviii. 15), and is more occupied in bewailing the sins of the past than in labouring to avoid future offences. Are you surprised to hear me explaining the days in this sense ? But remember these are the days that belong to the sepulchre, days of darkness and clouds, of affliction and lamentation (Soph. i. 15). There follows next the day of shame, a day not unlike the three preceding, in which the miserable soul is overwhelmed with horrible confusion, whilst she ponders on the multitude and magnitude of her crimes and sadly reviews with the eyes of the heart the repulsive images of her past

* Similarly in the magnificent discourse preached to the clergy of Paris and entitled "De Conversione," the holy Doctor says : " It is the lesson of our daily experience that when a man seriously resolves to amend his life, he begins at once to be more fiercely assaulted by the concupiscence of the flesh ; he is, as it were, like the Israelites of old, more cruelly oppressed in works of brick and clay for attempting to flee out of Egypt and from the power of King Pharo " (Exod. v) —(Translator.)

offences. The soul in this state hides nothing from herself : she rather examines everything, makes much of everything, even magnifies everything. Far from being over-lenient, she judges her own case with the most rigorous severity. But such severity is profitable, such cruelty is found worthy of the divine compassion. For she easily obtains the grace of God when in the interests of His glory she exercises justice against herself. Nevertheless, " Lazarus, come forth " (John xi. 43) now from the tomb and do not remain too long in this stench of corruption ; because the flesh that is malodorous is nigh to rottenness, and he that is excessively confounded and afflicted for his sins is not far from the brink of despair. Wherefore, " Lazarus, come forth." " Abyss calleth on abyss " (Ps. xli. 8), the abyss of light and mercy on the abyss of misery and darkness. The goodness of God is greater than thine iniquity, and where sin abounds, causes grace to abound the more (Rom. v. 20). " Lazarus, come forth," that is to say : " How long wilt thou remain under the cloud of thy conscience ? How long wilt thou ' be contrite upon thy bed ' (Ps. iv. 5) in heaviness of heart ? Come forth, walk abroad, rejoice in the light and free air of My compassion. This is only what thou hast read in the Prophet, ' With My praise I will bridle thee lest thou shouldst perish ' (Is. xlviii. 9). And more clearly still another prophet says of himself, ' My soul is troubled within myself, therefore will I remember Thee ' (Ps. xli. 7)."

Now what is the mystical meaning of the Saviour's command to " take away the stone," and a little later to " loose him and let him go " ? (John xi. 39-44). Are we to suppose, my brethren, that after being visited

by the grace of consolation our Lazarus will cease to "do penance, because the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. iii. 4), or will renounce "discipline, and so perchance the Lord be angry and he perish from the just way" (Ps. ii. 12)? God forbid! No, let the stone indeed be taken away, but let penance remain, penance that no longer burdens and oppresses the sick soul, but rather gives fresh life and vigour to the already revived and vigorous soul; for that which before she would not touch is now become her food, namely, to do the will of the Lord (Job vi. 7, John iv. 34). So too with discipline which has ceased to be a restraint upon her freedom, according to the words of the Apostle: "The law was not made for the just man" (1 Tim. i. 9), and serves now only to direct her willing steps "into the ways of peace" (Luke i. 79). It is manifestly to this spiritual resuscitation of Lazarus the Royal Prophet is alluding when he says, speaking to the Lord, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell" (Ps. xv. 10), because, as I remember to have remarked in the sermon for the second day of this feast, a guilty conscience may be called the hell or the prison of the soul. "Nor wilt Thou give Thy holy one (observe, the Prophet does not say, "*my* holy one," but "*Thy* holy one," viz., the one whom Thou hast made holy) to see corruption" (ibid.); although he was nigh to corruption, since he was already "of four days" and had begun to give out an offensive odour. Yea, he was on the point of utter dissolution and of "falling into the depths of evils" in which "the wicked man contemneth" (Prov. xviii. 3). But prevented by "the voice of power" (Ps. lxvii. 34) and reanimated by the same, he gives thanks in the words, "Thou hast made

known to me the ways of life, Thou shalt fill me with joy with Thy countenance" (Ps. xv. 10, 11). That is to say, "In order that she may begin to contemplate the beauty of Thy face, 'Thou hast brought forth my soul from hell' (Ps. xxix. 4), where 'my spirit was in anguish within me' (Ps. cxlii. 4) contemplating the exceeding loathsomeness of the face of its own conscience." "He cried," says the Evangelist, "with a great (*magna*) voice." Justly indeed is that voice called great, not so much because of its loudness as by reason of its piety and its irresistible power.

But whither have we come? Had we not begun to follow the Virgin in her flight to the heaven of heavens? And behold, with Lazarus, we have descended into the abyss! The sermon has dropped on a sudden from the splendour of virtue to the stench of a corpse four days in the sepulchre! What is the cause of this, my brethren, unless it be that I have been borne down by my own weight, that I have been attracted earthward by the abundance of matter found here ready to hand, and not less familiar than abundant? I acknowledge my incapacity to discourse on lofty themes, I make no attempt to hide my timidity. It is true, there is nothing gives me greater delight than to preach on the glories of the Virgin Mother, yet neither is there anything that causes me greater fear. For without speaking of the unutterable treasure of her merits or of her absolutely unique prerogative as Mother of God, she is—as indeed she well deserves—loved by all with such tender affection, so highly honoured and venerated, that although everyone is eager to glorify her name, whatever can be said on that ineffable subject, for the sole reason that it *can* be said, does not fully

satisfy, does not fully please, is not quite acceptable. How, in truth, could that little be other than unsatisfying, that little which the human intellect can comprehend of such incomprehensible glory? If I begin to speak in praise of her virginity, behold many other virgins after her seem to present themselves before me (Ps. xliv. 15). Should I extol her humility, perhaps again others may be found, even though but few, who have learned from her Divine Son to be "meek and humble of heart" (Matt. xi. 29). And when I wish to proclaim the multitude of her mercies, I recall that there have been some besides her remarkable for mercy both men and women. There is one thing, however, with regard to which, as the Poet sings, she

> Had no precursor in the years before
> And peerless shall remain for evermore,
> In whom with joys of motherhood we find
> The glory of virginity combined.—SEDULIUS.

"Mary," said the Lord, "hath chosen the best part." Oh, truly "the best part," because although conjugal fecundity is good, and virginal chastity better, more excellent than either is virginal fecundity, or should I call it fecund virginity? This is Mary's grand prerogative: it shall not be given to any other, because it "shall not be taken away from her." It is an unique privilege and at the same time ineffable, so that to speak about it in a worthy manner is as impossible as to attain to it. But what shall we say of her when we remember Whose Mother she is? What tongue, I ask, whether angelic or human, can worthily eulogise this Virgin Mother, the Mother not of a mere man but of true God? We have here, my brethren, a double wonder, a double prerogative, a double miracle. Yet

the two things combine in a glorious and most perfect harmony. For no other son save God would have been worthy of the Virgin nor would any mother but the Virgin have been worthy of God.

Yet, my brethren, if you examine diligently, you will find that not alone this union of virginity with motherhood, but likewise all the various virtues which appear to be common to many are really singular in Mary. Thus, for example, what purity can be anywhere found, even amongst the holy angels, comparable to the purity of her who was deemed worthy to be made the living sanctuary of the Holy Spirit and the dwelling of the Son of God? If we estimate the value of things from their rarity, she undoubtedly must be ranked over all who was the first amongst mortals to conceive the design of emulating upon earth the life of the angels. "How shall this be done," she asked the angel, "because I know not man?" (Luke i. 34). You see, my brethren, so firm was her purpose to live always as a virgin that it could not be shaken even by the words of the heavenly envoy promising her a son. "How shall this be done?" It cannot be in the ordinary way "because I know not man," and neither the desire of a son nor the hope of posterity shall ever induce me to abandon my resolution of remaining always a virgin.

And oh! how sublime and how precious in her was the virtue of humility, united with such transcendent purity, with such spotless innocence, with such a sinless conscience, with such a fulness of grace! Whence, O most blessed One, whence hast thou humility, and humility so great? This is the humility that deserved to be regarded by the Lord (Luke i. 48), it is the beauty

of this virtue the King hath desired (Ps. xliv. 12), and it is by the sweetness of its fragrance He has been drawn down to earth from His eternal home in the bosom of the Father (John i. 18). Notice how completely in accord is the Canticle of our Virgin with the nuptial song of the Old Testament, which in truth is not surprising, since Mary's womb is the Bridegroom's marriage-bed. "He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid," so sings the Virgin in her Magnificat (Luke, ibid.); and hear what she says in the epithalamium, "While the King was at His repose, my spikenard sent forth the odour thereof" (Cant. i. 11). Spikenard, as you know, is a lowly herb with purgative properties. Hence we may conclude that by the name spikenard is designated humility, through the odour and beauty of which Mary "hath found grace with God" (Luke i. 30).

Let him, O most blessed Virgin, let him refuse to extol thy mercy, who—if there be any—remembers to have invoked thy assistance and to have found thee wanting to him in his hour of need. As for us, thy poor servants, we congratulate thee on thine other virtues, but on this we rather congratulate ourselves. We praise thy virginity, we admire thy humility, but, because we are so miserable, more consoling to us than either is thy mercy: we love thy mercy more tenderly, we recall it more frequently, we more often invoke it. And the reason is, because it is to thy mercy we owe the restoration of the whole world and the salvation of all. For it is manifest that thou wast solicitous for the salvation of the entire human race when it was said to thee, "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God," the grace, that is, which thou wast

seeking. Who, then, shall be able to "comprehend what is the breadth and length and height and depth" (Ephes. iii. 18) of thy mercy, O Virgin most blessed? Its length stretches forward even as far as the day of doom to succour all that invoke it. Its breadth is as broad as the universe, so that of thee too it can be said, "the whole earth is full of thy mercy" (Ps. xxxii. 5). Its height reaches up to the city of God the ruins whereof it has been the means of repairing. And its depth goes down to them that "sit in darkness and in the shadow of death" (Ps. cvi. 10) for whom it has obtained redemption. For it is through thee, O Mary, that heaven has been filled, that hell has been emptied, that the breaches in the wall of the spiritual Jerusalem have been repaired (Ps. l. 20), and that the life they had lost has been restored to miserable, expectant mortals. Thus has thy all-powerful and most tender charity abounded not alone in sentiments of compassion but also in deeds of mercy, equally rich in both.

Therefore, my dearest brethren, let us run with thirsting souls to this fountain of mercy, let our misery have recourse with all the eagerness of desire to this treasury of compassion. Behold, O most blessed One, such are the affections with which we have striven to accompany thee to-day on thy heavenward path to reunion with thy Son. Henceforth, I beseech thee, let it be the concern of thy loving-kindness to make known to the whole world the grace thou hast found with God, by obtaining through thy holy prayers pardon for the guilty, health for the sick, courage for the pusillanimous, consolation for the afflicted, help and deliverance for all in danger. On this day also, this

day of festivity and universal rejoicing, may we, thy poor servants, O Queen most benign, who praise and invoke thy most sweet name of Mary : may we deserve to receive through thy intercession an abundant largess of His heavenly grace from Jesus Christ, thy Son and our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

SERMON FOR THE SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE ASSUMPTION.

On the Dignity of Mary and on the Mystical Stars that constitute her Crown.

"And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars."—Apoc. xii. 1.

It is true, most dearly beloved, that the first man and the first woman did us grievous harm, but—thanks be to God!—by another Man and another Woman all that was lost has been restored to us, not without the addition of abundant grace. For "not as the offence, so also the gift" (Rom. v. 15): the magnitude of the grace won for us by Christ exceeds beyond all proportion the ruin wrought by Adam. Instead of breaking that which was injured (Matt. xxii. 20), the Almighty Creator in His infinite wisdom and goodness restored it to its original perfection, yea, made it better than it had been before, forming a new Adam from the ancient and giving us in Mary a second Eve. Christ alone would no doubt have been sufficient, for even now "all our sufficiency is from Him" (2 Cor. iii. 5); but it was not good for us that the Man should be alone (Gen. ii. 18). It seemed more congruous that as both sexes contributed to the ruin of our race, so should both have a part in the work of reparation. A truly faithful and powerful "Mediator of God and men is the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. ii. 5); but the Majesty of His Godhead inspires mortals with fear. His Manhood

seems to be swallowed up in His Divinity, not that there is any real confusion of the Natures, but because His human affections are in a manner deified. He is the Lord to Whom we have to sing not mercy alone, but "mercy and judgment" (Ps. c. 1): because although "He learned compassion by the things which He suffered" (Heb. v. 8) "that He might become merciful" (Heb. ii. 17), He has also to exercise the judicial office (John v. 22). It is written, moreover, that "the Lord our God is a consuming fire" (Deut. iv. 24). Not without cause, therefore, does the sinner fear to approach Him lest, "as wax melteth before the fire, so should the wicked perish before the face of God" (Ps. lxvii. 3).

From this, therefore, it ought to appear evident that the Woman pronounced "blessed among women" (Luke i. 28) is not without her proper function: for her also is found something to do in the work of reconciliation. So great a Mediator is Christ that we have need of another to mediate between Him and us, and for this we can find none so well qualified as Mary. A most cruel mediatrix was our mother Eve, through whom the "old serpent" (Apoc. xii. 9) communicated the mortal poison of sin even to the man; but Mary is faithful, Mary offers the remedy of salvation both to men and women. The former became the means of our seduction, the latter co-operated in our reconciliation; the former was made the instrument of temptation, the latter the channel of redemption.

Why should human fragility fear to have recourse to Mary? In her is found nothing austere, nothing to terrify: everything about her is full of sweetness. She has for all only the sweetness of milk and the softness

of wool. Review carefully in your minds the whole of the Gospel narrative, and if you can discover in Mary anything at all that appears reproachful or harsh, or any, even the very least, sign of indignation, look upon her with suspicion for the future and fear to approach her. But if, as must really be the fact, you find everything that belongs to her full of goodness and grace, redolent of mercy and meekness: oh, then return thanks to Him Who, in His compassionate loving-kindness, has given us such a mediatrix as we cannot possibly distrust. For she has "become all things to all men" (1 Cor. ix. 22), she has made herself "a debtor to the wise and to the unwise" (Rom. i. 14). To all she opens wide the bosom of her mercy so that all may receive of her fulness (John i. 16): captives deliverance, the sick health, the sad consolation, sinners pardon, the just grace, the angels joy, the whole Blessed Trinity glory, and the Person of the Son the Substance of His Human Nature: so that "there is no one that can hide himself from the heat" of her charity (Ps. xviii. 7).

Does it not seem to you, my dearest brethren, that she can be considered as the "woman clothed with the sun" of whom the Beloved Disciple speaks in the Apocalypse? I allow that what follows in the prophetic vision obliges us to understand it of the Church Militant. Nevertheless, as it appears to me, we can also and not unnaturally understand it of Mary. For she in truth may be said to have clothed herself with a second sun. I mean to say: just as the material, visible sun "riseth upon the good and the bad" (Matt. v. 45) without making any distinction, so does Mary show herself full of kindness and sweetness to all and embraces the necessities of all in the limitless extent

of her compassion, without ever inquiring into antecedent merit or demerit. She is exalted above every kind of defect ; she beyond all other creatures has risen over and transcended by a most admirable mode of elevation whatever is perishable or corruptible, so that she may be truly said to have the moon—the symbol of change and instability—under her feet. With regard to the material moon, you would not consider me to have said anything very wonderful if I told you that that was under the feet of her who, as we are obliged to believe, has been exalted above all the angelic choirs, above even the Cherubim and the Seraphim. The moon, however, is wont to be taken as the type not alone of the defect of corruption but also of human folly, and is moreover employed not infrequently to designate the Church on earth : for in its mutability it bears a resemblance to folly and corruption, and to the Church Militant in that it shines with borrowed splendour. Now both these metaphorical moons—if I may be allowed so to speak—are rightly placed under the feet of Mary, but in different ways. "The fool changeth like the moon," as it is written—whilst "the wise man continueth as the sun" (Ecclus. xxvii. 12). For the sun possesses steadfast heat and light, whereas the moon can boast of light alone, and a light that is extremely inconstant and variable, that "never continueth in the same state" (Job xiv. 2). Not without reason, therefore, is Mary represented as clothed with the sun, since she has penetrated the unfathomable abyss of divine wisdom to a degree that is almost incredible ; so that we can say of her that she is immersed in that ocean of inaccessible light as utterly as is possible to any created nature not deified by

hypostatic union. She is plunged, I say, in that heavenly fire wherewith the Prophet's lips were purified (Is. vi. 6, 7), and wherewith the Seraphim are inflamed.* For Mary has merited far more than the prophets or the Seraphim. To her it is due not merely to be lightly touched with that fire, but to be completely surrounded with it, to be utterly enveloped and absorbed in it. Most intense, undoubtedly, is the light and heat of this Woman's clothing, in whom everything is so beautifully bright and warm that it would be impious to suspect her of containing anything, I do not say darksome, but even obscure or otherwise than perfectly luminous; anything, I do not say tepid, but otherwise than most exceedingly ardent.

The moon of folly, therefore, is so entirely under her feet that she has nothing in common with senseless women and belongs not to the number of foolish virgins. Yea, more: even that first of fools and prince over the whole empire of folly, who, having indeed "changed as the moon," "lost his wisdom in his beauty" (Ezech. xxviii. 17), even he has been trampled and crushed under Mary's heel (Gen. iii. 15), and suffers now a most miserable servitude. For Mary is the Woman, promised of old by God, who should crush the serpent's head with the foot of her virtue, and for whose heel he has lain in wait with many wiles, but all to no purpose (ibid.). It is through Mary alone that every impious heresy has been vanquished.† One heresiarch maintained that Christ, although brought forth by her,

* The Hebrew word "seraph" means to "burn," so that these highest of heavenly spirits owe their name to the burning ardour of their love.—(Translator.)

† Cf. Newman's *Discourses to Mixed Congregations*, pages 367 et sqq.

was not formed from her flesh ; another insisted with serpentine voice (*sibilabat*) that she did not bring forth the Divine Child at all, but only found Him ; a third put forward the blasphemous doctrine that she ceased to be a virgin, at least after the Saviour's birth ; whilst a fourth, unable to endure that she should be called the Mother of God, impiously sought to deprive her of that crowning title. But the serpents lying in wait have been crushed, the would-be supplanters have been trodden under foot, the slanderers of Mary have been put to confusion and, behold, all generations now call her blessed (Luke i. 48). Even at the beginning and long before the time of these heretics, the dragon, in the person of King Herod, had lain in wait for the Mother whilst she was about to be delivered, in order to seize and devour her Son (Apoc. xii. 4), because there have always been enmities between the Woman's Seed and the seed of the dragon.

But, my brethren, if you prefer to understand the Church as designated by the name of the moon, because, like the moon, it shines with a borrowed splendour, borrowed from Him Who has said, " Without Me you can do nothing " (John xv. 5) : you have clearly indicated to you the mediatrix of whom I have just been speaking. " A great sign appeared in heaven," says the Evangelist, " a woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet." O my dearest brethren, let us embrace the feet of Mary, let us prostrate ourselves at those blessed feet in devout supplication. Let us take hold of her and not let her go until she blesses us (Gen. xxxii. 26), for she surely has the power. What else is the symbolic fleece placed between the dew and the floor (Judges vi. 37), and the Woman standing

between the sun and the moon, but Mary mediating between Christ and the Church? I suppose the fleece drenched with the dew does not surprise you so much as the Woman clothed with the sun. For certainly this latter image implies a very intimate relation and a very close proximity of the Woman to the sun. How indeed can a nature so delicate subsist in the midst of such a consuming fire? No wonder, O holy Moses, no wonder thou art astonished and desirest to examine this miracle more closely. Nevertheless, "put off the shoes from thy feet" (Exod. iii. 5); lay aside the encumbrance of thy carnal thoughts, if thou wishest to approach. "I will go," he said, "and see this great sight" (ibid. 3). A great sight indeed was that—a bush burning without being consumed; a great wonder also—a Woman clothed with the sun yet suffering no harm. It is not in accordance with the nature of a bush to be entirely surrounded with flames and remain unburnt; nor is it possible for a woman of her own natural strength to endure to be clothed with the sun. No, this is not the province of human virtue or even of angelic: something greater is required. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee," said the Archangel, speaking to the Virgin (Luke i. 35). And lest she should reply that "God is a Spirit" (John iv. 24) and "the Lord our God a consuming fire" (Deut. iv. 24), he went on to reassure her: "The power—not my power, nor thy power—but the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee." No wonder, then, if under the shelter of such a divine shadow even a woman can endure to be clothed with the sun.

"A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun." Yes, in the words of the Psalmist, she

was "clothed with light as with a garment" (Ps. ciii. 2). Perhaps "the sensual man understandeth not" this, because it is spiritual and consequently seems "foolishness to him" (1 Cor. ii. 14). But not so did it seem to the Apostle who recommended his followers to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. xiii. 14). O Lady, how intimate is thy relation with the Sovereign Lord of all! How near, how closely united to Him thou hast merited to be! What a fulness of grace thou hast found with Him! He abideth in thee and thou in Him; thou clothest Him and art in turn clothed by Him. Thou clothest Him with the substance of thy virginal flesh and He clothes thee in return with the glory of His majesty. Thou clothest the Sun with a cloud and art clothed by the Sun with His splendour. "For the Lord hath created a new thing upon the earth": that "a woman should compass a man" (Jer. xxxi. 22), and no other man but Christ, of Whom it is said, "Behold a Man, the Orient is His name" (Zach. vi. 12). A new thing hath the Lord created in heaven also: that a woman should appear clothed with the sun. The Mother has crowned the Son and has deserved to be crowned by Him in turn. "Go forth, ye daughters of Sion," says the Holy Spirit in the Canticle, "and see King Solomon in the diadem wherewith His Mother hath crowned Him" * (Cant. iii. 11). But another time for this. Go forth now to see the Queen in the diadem wherewith her Son hath crowned her.

* The Saint elsewhere proposes two explanations of this text: (1) the Mother is Mary and she has crowned her Son, the true Peace-Maker, with the diadem of His Sacred Humanity; (2) the Mother is the Synagogue and she has crowned her Son, the Messiah, with a crown of thorns.—(Translator)

"And on her head a crown of twelve stars." Most worthy of being crowned with a diadem of stars is that august head which, surpassing in splendour all the stars of the firmament, is more an ornament to them than they are to it. And what wonder that she who is clothed with the sun should be crowned with the stars? She is encompassed "as with the flowers of roses in the days of the spring" (Ecclus. l. 8) and as with the lilies of the valleys. For the Bridegroom's "left hand is under her head and with His right He embraces her" (Cant. ii. 6). Who can appraise the jewels that adorn Mary's crown? Who can name the stars that compose her queenly diadem? My brethren, it is beyond the power of any man to say what is the nature of this crown and rightly to explain its constitution.

Far be it from me, therefore, with my very limited capacity, to be so rashly presumptuous as to endeavour to pry into this divine secret. Nevertheless, I think we may, without any impropriety, understand those twelve stars wherewith Mary is singularly adorned as designating twelve grand prerogatives of grace. For we can discover in Mary three kinds of prerogatives, which I will call the prerogatives of heaven, the prerogatives of the flesh, and the prerogatives of the heart. And if now these three constellations be multiplied by four as containing each four stars, we shall have perhaps the twelve stars which make the diadem of our glorious Queen resplendent beyond all others. Now, with regard to the first of our constellations, it seems to me I can discern the brightness of one beautiful star in Mary's generation, of another in the angelic salutation, of a third in the descent of the

Holy Ghost upon her, and of a fourth in her unspeakable conception of the Son of God. So, too, in the second constellation four bright and beautiful stars are plainly visible: her prerogative of being the first of virgins, her virginal fecundity, her easy pregnancy, her painless child-birth. And amongst what I have named the prerogatives of the heart—which constitute our third constellation—we behold shining with dazzling splendour her modest meekness, her devout humility, her magnanimous faith, her interior martyrdom. I will leave it to your own industry to examine each of these stars more particularly. For myself, I think I shall have done sufficient if I am able to point them out in a few words for your pious contemplation.

What, then, is the star which adorns with its splendour the generation of Mary? Undoubtedly it is the nobility of her descent: for she is sprung from a line of kings, from the seed of Abraham, from the illustrious stock of David. Perhaps this will seem but slight honour. Add to it therefore what is known to you all that she was given by God to her parents and ancestors as the reward of their singular sanctity, that she was promised to the Patriarchs long ages before, that she was foreshadowed in mystical wonders, and heralded from afar in prophetic oracles. For she it is who was prefigured by the rod of Aaron what time it blossomed without roots in the earth (Num. xvii. 8); she it is who was typified by Gedeon's fleece, which was found saturated with dew in the midst of the dry thrashing-floor (Judges vi. 37, 38); she it is whom the Eastern Gate of Ezechiel's prophetic vision was intended to designate, the gate that was to be opened to no man "because the Lord God of Israel hath

entered in by it" (Ezech. xliv. 2); she it is, finally, who was promised by Isaias, at one time under the image of the "rod springing forth out of the root of Jesse" (Is. xi. 1), at another more clearly as the Virgin that should bear a Son (Is. vii. 14). Justly, therefore, is it said with reference to this prodigy of the Woman clothed with the sun that "a great sign appeared in heaven" (Apoc. xii. 1), since, as you know, it was promised from heaven long ages before it was seen upon earth. "The Lord Himself shall give you a sign," said the Prophet, "Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son" (Is. vii. 14). Great in truth is the sign He has given us because He Who has given it is Himself so great. What created eye can contemplate the glory of this unique prerogative without being dazzled and blinded with the excess of its splendour? The very fact that she was saluted with so much reverence and humility by the Archangel that he seemed to have beheld her already on her royal throne, exalted above all the shining ranks of the heavenly host, and to have all but worshipped this daughter of Adam—he who had been accustomed hitherto to receive the willingly-accorded worship of men: this very fact, I say, is sufficient to show us how surpassing is the merit of our own glorious Virgin and how singular her grace.

Bright too is the glory of her unparalleled motherhood. For not in iniquity did Mary conceive her Son —in this unlike all other mothers (Ps. l. 7): she alone amongst women conceived through the operation of grace and by the power of the Holy Spirit. And He Whom she brought forth is true God and the true Son of God, so that the Child Who was born of the Virgin

is at the same time the Son of God and the Son of man, at the same time true God and true Man: here, my brethren, you have a very abyss of light, the dazzling refulgence of which I can hardly believe it possible for even the angelic eye to endure. Besides, that which rendered particularly illustrious both the integrity of her flesh and her vow of virginity was the very novelty of her holy purpose: because, namely, in liberty of spirit going beyond all the prescriptions of the Mosaic Law, she consecrated her virginity to God by vow, that she might be spotlessly "holy in body and in spirit" (1 Cor. vii. 34). And she proved the immovable firmness of her resolve by the constancy of will implied in her answer to the Angel's promise of a son: "How shall this be done because I know not man?" (Luke i. 34). Likely enough, the reason why she was at first troubled at the greeting of Gabriel "and thought within herself what manner of salutation this might be" (ibid. 29) was the fact that he pronounced her "blessed among women," whereas it had ever been her wish to be blessed among virgins. Consequently, on hearing from the Angel the words, "Blessed art thou among women," she "thought within herself what manner of salutation this might be," for it seemed to her to have a suspicious sound. But the moment the danger to her virginity appeared manifest in the promise of a son, she could no longer conceal her alarm and said, "How shall this be done, because I know not man?" Deservedly therefore, did she obtain the one blessing without forfeiting the other, so that her virginity derived a great increase of glory from her fruitfulness and her fruitfulness in like manner was enhanced by her virginity: as two stars that seem to

borrow additional brightness from each other's rays. For it is doubtless a grand thing to be a virgin ; but to be a virgin and a mother at once—that is something far greater and grander in every way.

Deservedly also was she alone spared that trial of extreme lassitude from which all other mothers suffer during the period of gestation, because she alone conceived without any experience of carnal delight. Hence, at the very beginning of her pregnancy, when other women are most grievously afflicted, we find Mary ascending the mountains with all alacrity in order to minister to her cousin Elizabeth (Luke i. 39). We read again how she went up from Galilee to Bethlehem on the very eve of her child-birth, bearing that most precious Deposit, bearing that most light Burden, bearing Him by Whom she was herself borne. And with regard to her child-birth, how brilliant a star is that which shines out in the unparalleled exultation wherewith she brought forth her unparalleled Offspring, exempted alone amongst women from the common curse and pain that belong to parturition ! If we are to estimate the value of things from their rarity, these prerogatives must be held in highest esteem, since surely nothing more rare can be found. For truly with respect to them all Mary

> Had no precursor in the years before
> And peerless shall remain for evermore.—SEDULIUS.

And for ourselves, dearest brethren, if we contemplate by the light of faith these glorious privileges of the Virgin Mother, they will be sure to arouse in us sentiments of admiration, veneration, and devotion, yea, and will impart to us no little consolation.

But the wonders whereof it remains to speak have to

be imitated as well as admired. As concerns the preceding, it was not given to any of us to be promised by God or announced from heaven long before our birth "at sundry times and in divers manners" (Heb. i. 1), nor to receive from the mouth of the Archangel Gabriel the honour of so unusual a salutation: much less can we pretend to a participation in the two others, with regard to which the Virgin seems to say like the Prophet, "My secret to myself, my secret to myself" (Is. xxiv. 16). For she is the only one of whom it has ever been said, "That Which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. i. 20); she is the only one to whom it has ever been said, "The Holy Which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke i. 35). By all means, let other "virgins be brought to the King," but let it be "after her" (Ps. xliv. 15); for she claims the first place for herself alone. Much more is she solitary in her privilege of conceiving without corruption, of bearing without weariness, and of bringing forth without pain. Consequently, my brethren, nothing of these things is required of us. But there are certain other things which are required. For should any of us be found wanting in the meekness of modesty, or in humility of heart, or in greatness and constancy of faith, or in compassion of soul: think you we shall be able to justify our negligence by pleading that these gifts like the others are singular in Mary? No, my brethren, most assuredly we shall not. Undoubtedly, the blush on the face of a modest man is a most lovely jewel in his diadem, a most beautiful star on his brow.*

* Cf. the Saint's beautiful Sermon on Modesty, the last of the series on the Canticle of Canticles.

And how can anyone suppose that this grace was wanting to her who was full of grace? (Luke i. 28). Oh, yes, Mary was modest in the highest degree. This can be proved from the Gospel. For where does she ever appear garrulous? Where do we ever find her in the least degree presumptuous? She was content to stand outside the door, seeking a word with her Son, when in virtue of her authority as His Mother she might have unceremoniously entered the house where Jesus was preaching and interrupted the sermon (Matt. xii. 46). In the whole text of the four Gospels—unless my memory plays me false—Mary can be heard speaking not oftener than four times. The first occasion is where she answered the Angel, but only after she had been addressed by him once and again. The second is where she spoke to Elizabeth, in whose womb the voice of her salutation had made the unborn Baptist to leap for joy, and whilst the mother of John was magnifying Mary, Mary's sole solicitude was to magnify the Lord (Luke i. 40-46). The third is where she complained to her Son, when He was now twelve years of age, that she and His father had been seeking Him sorrowing (Luke ii. 48). The fourth is where she spoke to Jesus and the waiters at the wedding-feast (John ii. 3-5). Her words on this last occasion gave signal proof of her natural meekness and virginal modesty. For esteeming as her own the embarrassment of her neighbour, she could not rest easy, neither could she forbear speaking to her Son of the failure of the wine. And on being apparently reproved by Him, she showed how "meek and humble of heart" (Matt. xi. 29) she was by answering never a word, yet without losing confidence, since she said to

the waiters, " Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye " (John ii. 5).

Have you not read how in the beginning, when the shepherds came to Bethlehem, Mary was the first to meet them? " They came with haste," says the Evangelist, " and they found Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in the manger " (Luke ii. 16). So also with the Magi, as you will remember: they found the Child, but not without His Mother (Matt. ii. 11). And when Mary was bringing the Lord of the temple into the temple of the Lord, she heard much concerning Him from holy Simeon, much also that concerned herself, being " swift to hear but slow to speak " (James i. 19); and we are told that she " kept all these words, pondering them in her heart " (Luke ii. 19). But on none of these occasions was she heard to utter a single syllable about the glorious mystery of the Lord's incarnation. Woe unto us " whose soul is in our nostrils " (Is. ii. 22)! Woe unto us who imitate the fool that " uttereth all his mind " (Prov. xxix. 11)! Woe unto us

> Whose words flow out as unrestrained
> As water through a sieve.*

How often Mary heard her Son not only speaking to the multitude in parables (Matt. xiii. 34), but revealing to His disciples apart the mysteries of the kingdom of God! She saw Him working miracles, she saw Him hanging on the cross, she saw Him expiring in torments, she saw Him rising from the tomb, she saw Him lastly mounting up to heaven. But how seldom in the records of all these wonders do we find

* " Pleni rimarum effluimus undique " (Terence, *Eunocho*, I. ii. 25).

it mentioned that the voice of this most modest Virgin, of this most chaste Turtle-Dove was heard! Again, we read in the Acts of the Apostles how, after returning from the Mount of Olives, "all were persevering with one mind in prayer." Who? Surely if Mary happened to be present she must be mentioned first, for she is over all other creatures, both on account of her Son's Divine dignity and by reason of the merit of her personal holiness. Yet what do we find? "Peter and John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James of Alpheus and Simon Zelotes, and Jude, the brother of James: all these were persevering with one mind in prayer with the women and Mary the Mother of Jesus" (Acts i. 13, 14). You see, my brethren, how she made herself the last even of the women, so that she might occupy the last place of all. The apostles were indeed still carnally-minded—"for as yet the Spirit was not given to them because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John vii. 39)—when "there arose a strife amongst them as to which of them should seem to be greater" (Luke xxii. 24), whilst Mary, in proportion as she surpassed all, humbled herself in all things, yea and regarded herself as the least of all. Rightly, therefore, was she from last made first who, whereas she was the greatest of all, had made herself the least of all (Matt. xx. 16). Rightly was she made mistress of all who conducted herself as the handmaid of all. And rightly was she exalted above the angels, who in her unutterable modesty and meekness had placed herself below widows and penitents, even below her from whom seven devils had been cast out (Luke viii. 2). O my dearest children, have zeal, I beg of you, have zeal for this virtue of meek-

ness, if you love Mary; if you desire to please Mary neglect not to imitate her modesty. For there is nothing more becoming a man, nothing more proper for a Christian, above all, nothing more befitting a monk.

Now with regard to the Virgin's humility, that virtue shines forth clearly enough from her meekness. These two virtues of humility and meekness are foster-sisters, suckled at the same breast, nay, they have been united yet more intimately in Him Who said, "Learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart" (Matt. xi. 29). And just as pride is the mother of presumption, so it is only from sincere humility that true meekness can come. It is not, however, in her silence alone that Mary's humility is manifest: it appears more evidently still in her words. She heard the announcement, "The Holy Which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God," and her only answer was: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord" (Luke ii. 38)! She then set out on a journey to visit her cousin Elizabeth, to whom the Virgin's incomparable glory was revealed by the Holy Spirit Himself; so that, over-awed by the dignity of Mary, she cried out, "Whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" (ibid. 43). She also acknowledged the power of grace in the voice that saluted her, by adding, "As soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy" (ibid. 44). And she commended the faith of Mary when she said, "Blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord" (ibid. 45). Magnificent eulogiums indeed! But the Virgin's devout humility would allow her to keep

nothing for herself. All was referred to Him Whose gifts were being praised in her. "Thou dost magnify me, the Mother of the Lord," so she says in effect in answer to her cousin, "but 'my soul doth magnify the Lord.' Thou sayest that at the sound of my voice the infant in thy womb leaped for joy, but 'my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour' (ibid. 46, 47). Yea and if thy unborn infant, as 'the friend of the Bridegroom, rejoiceth with joy,' it is 'because of the Bridegroom's voice' (John iii. 29). Thou pronouncest me blessed for having believed, but the one cause both of my belief and of my blessedness is the regard of the Sovereign Goodness, so that if 'from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed' it is only 'because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid' (Luke i. 48)."

But, brethren, are we to suppose that St. Elizabeth erred in what she uttered under the inspiration of the Spirit of God? Heaven forbid! Blessed assuredly was she whom the Lord had regard to and blessed also she that believed. In fact, we can say that Mary's heroic faith was the noble fruit of the divine regard. For by an unutterable artifice—if the expression may be allowed—of the Holy Spirit Who came down upon her, such magnanimity of faith was united in the secret chamber of the Virgin's heart to such profound humility that—as I have said of the union of integrity with motherhood—these two stars also received additional brightness from each other's rays. That is to say: her abysmal humility did not diminish the magnanimity of her faith, nor did the latter prejudice the former; but whilst remaining the humblest of all in her conceit of herself, she showed herself most magnanimous by

her faith in the divine promise: she, who considered herself nothing better than a poor little handmaid, believed, nevertheless, with the most undoubting faith, that she was chosen by the Lord for the accomplishment of His incomprehensible design of becoming man, chosen for that most "admirable intercourse,"* chosen to co-operate in that unsearchable mystery; and she was firmly persuaded that she would soon be verily and indeed the Mother of the God-Man. It is the prerogative of divine grace to be able to work this double miracle in the hearts of the elect: that humility shall not make them pusillanimous, nor magnanimity render them proud, but rather that these two virtues shall assist and enhance one another. Thus it comes about that not only no self-elation results from magnanimity but, contrariwise, humility is thereby best promoted, for men are found to be distrustful of self and grateful to their Divine Benefactor in proportion as they are magnanimous; on the other hand, likewise, the virtue of humility does not make a man faint-hearted, but on the contrary, the less one is wont to presume on his own powers, even in the smallest things, the greater shall be his reliance on the help of God in matters more important.

The † martyrdom of Mary—which, if you remember, I have enumerated in the twelfth and last place amongst the stars of her diadem—we find recorded for us both in the prophecy of Simeon and in the story

* Words taken from the first antiphon for Vespers of the Feast of Circumcision.

† This and the following paragraph are used for the lessons of the second nocturn on the Feast of the Seven Dolours, kept in the Cistercian Order on the Friday before Palm Sunday.—(Translator.)

of the Lord's passion. "Behold," said the holy old man, speaking of the Infant Jesus, "this Child is set for a sign which shall be contradicted, and thine own soul," he added, addressing the Mother, "a sword shall pierce" (Luke ii. 34, 35). Truly, O blessed Mother, truly did the iron pierce thy soul (Ps. civ. 18), for it could not otherwise pierce the Flesh of thy Son. After the death of thy Jesus—thy Jesus, I say, because although common to all of us He is in an especial manner thine—His Soul could not be wounded by the cruel lance that opened His side—not sparing Him even in death Whom it was no longer capable of hurting—but thy soul, O Mary, it could and did transpierce. For His Soul no longer occupied His now lifeless Heart, whence thy soul could by no means be withdrawn. Consequently thy soul was transfixed with the violence of sorrow, so that thou art justly proclaimed to be more than a martyr, since the sufferings thou didst endure from the force of thy compassion far exceeded all the pains that could have been inflicted on thy flesh.

"Woman, behold thy son" (John xix. 26). Poor Mother! Were not these words to thee as the sharpest of swords, piercing thy soul "and reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit" (Heb. iv. 12)? Oh, what an exchange! John is given thee in place of Jesus, the servant in place of the Lord, the disciple for the Master, the son of Zebedee instead of the Son of God, a mere man instead of Him Who is true and very God! Oh, how the sound of those words must have pierced through thy most affectionate heart, since even the very remembrance of them is enough to break these stony, these iron hearts of ours! Wonder

not, dearest brethren, that Mary is said to have suffered martyrdom in her soul. He alone ought to be surprised at this whosoever does not remember to have heard St. Paul mentioning amongst the worst crimes of the Gentiles that they were "without affection" (Rom. i. 31). Far removed from such a vice was the heart of Mary, and far removed from it also be the hearts of us, her poor servants. But perchance some one will say to me, "Did not Mary know beforehand that her Son was doomed to die"? Undoubtedly. "Did she not hope that He would speedily arise again from the tomb"? Most firmly. "And nevertheless, in spite of this foreknowledge and this expectation did she sorrow over her crucified Son"? Yea, and with a sorrow exceeding great. Let me ask thee, who art thou, my brother, and whence hast thou derived this wisdom that thou shouldst marvel more at Mary's compassion than at the passion of her Son? Dost thou grant that He could die even the death of the body, and yet deny her the power of participating in His death by the affections of her heart? The Son's death of pain was caused by love greater than which no man hath (John xv. 13), and the Mother's death of sympathy was caused by love the like of which was never felt before in the heart of a pure creature.

O Mother of mercy, the Moon, that is, the Church on earth, prostrate at thy sacred feet, implores of thee, her appointed Advocate with the Divine Sun of Justice, implores of thee with devout supplication and by all the affections of thy most pure heart, that thou wouldst obtain for her the grace "in thy light to see the light" (Ps. xxxv. 10), that thou wouldst conciliate

for her the favour of thy Son Who loves thee and has adorned thee beyond all others, investing thee with a "robe of glory" (Ecclus. vi. 32) and setting "a crown of beauty upon thy head" (Ezech. xvi. 12). Thou, O Virgin, art full of all grace, full of the dew of heaven, "flowing with delights, leaning upon thy Beloved" (Cant. viii. 5). Feed us to-day, O great Lady, feed us, thy poor mendicants, with the food of the spirit; let "the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from thy table" (Matt. xv. 27); give not alone Abraham's servant but his camels also to drink from thy overflowing pitcher (Gen. xxiv. 18, 19), because thou art the true Rebecca chosen and predestined for the Son of the Most High, Jesus Christ our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

(September 8.)

"My Beloved to me and I to Him Who feedeth among the lilies till the day break and the shadows retire."—Cant. ii. 16, 17.

Heaven rejoices to-day in the presence of the Virgin Mother and her memory is revered upon earth. So it is, my brethren, because to the blessed above belongs the actual possession of all good, whilst we have to be content with the memorials thereof; their portion is the fulness of bliss, ours but a taste of the first-fruits; they exult in the vision of the glory of God, we in His name. "Thy name, O Lord, is for ever," sings the Psalmist, "Thy memorial, O Lord, from generation to generation" (Ps. cxxxiv. 13). Mark the expression, "from generation to generation." This evidently applies not to the holy angels but to men. Do you wish to know for certain that we have here on earth only the name and the memorial of God and that His presence is exhibited above? "Thus, therefore, shall you pray," said Christ, "Our Father Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name" (Matt. vi. 9). This is in truth the "prayer of faith," (James. v. 15), the opening words of which remind us of our adoption as the children of God and admonish us that the earth is but the place of our pilgrimage; so that "knowing that while we are in the body we are absent from the Lord" (2 Cor. v. 6), we may begin to "groan within

ourselves, waiting for the adoption of the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 23), waiting for the presence of the Father. It s with the same significance, therefore, the Psalmist says, speaking even of Christ, "A spirit before our face is Christ the Lord; under His shadow we shall live among the Gentiles" (Jer. Lam. iv. 20, juxta LXX). "Among the gentiles," yes, but not among the blessed angels: for there we shall live no longer under His shadow, but in the full splendour of His divine glory. "In the splendours of the saints, from the womb before the day-star I begot Thee" (Ps. cix. 3): but these, as you know, are the words of the Heavenly Father addressed to His only begotten Son.

It was under the shadow, not in the splendour, that the same Son was brought forth by His Mother, yet under no other shadow than that wherewith the Most High Himself overshadowed her (Luke i. 35). Rightly, therefore, does the Church sing—not the Church of the saints triumphant, which is above, amid the splendours of the saints, but that which is as yet in banishment here below—"I sat down under His shadow Whom I desired, and His fruit was sweet to my palate" (Cant. ii. 3). She had requested of the Bridegroom that He would show her the meridian brightness wherein He feedeth (Cant. i. 6), but her petition was refused, and instead of the fulness of light she obtained only the shadow: instead of the satiety she longed for she was given a foretaste. Notice how she does not say, "I sat down under His shadow *which* I desired," but, "under His shadow *Whom* I desired." For it was not the shadow she had so eagerly asked for, but the meridian splendour, the perfect light of the Perfect

Light. "And His fruit," she adds, "was sweet to my palate," that is, "to my taste." "How long wilt Thou not spare me, nor suffer me to swallow down my spittle?" (Job vii. 19). How long must I be satisfied with what Thou offerest in the words, "Taste and see that the Lord is sweet" (Ps. xxxiii. 9)? Thy fruit, nevertheless, is sweet to the palate and delightful to the taste, so that even for this much the Spouse had good reason to break forth into the voice of thanksgiving and praise (Is. li. 3).

But when shall it be said to us, "Eat, O friends, and drink, and be inebriated, my dearly beloved" (Cant. v. 1)? "Let the just feast," sings the Psalmist, but above "in the sight of God" (Ps. lxvii. 4), and not here below under the shadow. And the same Prophet says of himself, "I shall be satisfied when Thy glory shall appear" (Ps. xvi. 15). The Lord Jesus also thus addressed His apostles: "You are they who have continued with Me in My temptations; and I dispose to you, as My Father hath disposed to Me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at My table." But where, O Lord? "In My kingdom" (Luke xxii. 28-30). Truly "blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God" (Luke xiv. 15). "Hallowed," therefore, "be Thy name" by which "Thou, O Lord, art among us" even now whilst we abide upon earth, "dwelling by faith in our hearts" (Ephes. iii. 17), for even now "Thy name is called upon by us" (Jer. xiv. 9). And may "Thy kingdom come" (Matt. vi. 10). Yea, let that kingdom "which is perfect" come, and let "that which is in part be done away" (1 Cor. xiii. 10). "Now," says the Apostle, "you have your fruit unto sanctification,

and the end life everlasting" (Rom. vi. 22). Life everlasting! A never-failing fountain which irrigates the whole extent of the paradise of God! And not merely does it irrigate: it floods, that "fountain of gardens, the well of living waters which run with a strong stream from Libanus" (Cant. iv. 15); it is the river the stream whereof "maketh the city of God joyful" (Ps. xlv. 5).

Now what is this fountain of life if it be not Christ the Lord? "When Christ shall appear Who is your life," says the Apostle, "then you also shall appear with Him in glory" (Col. iii. 4). Truly He Who is the fulness of all good emptied Himself (Phil. ii. 7) in order to be "made unto us justice and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor. i. 30), although not yet appearing as our life, our glory, or our beatitude. For the "Fountain is conveyed abroad" in a stream even to us; Its waters flow "in the streets," although "the stranger partake not of them" (Prov. v. 16, 17). This stream from the heavenly source descends to us through an Aqueduct; it does not indeed exhibit all the fulness of the Fountain, but it serves to moisten our dry and withered hearts with some few drops of the waters of grace, giving more to one, less to another. The Aqueduct itself is always full, so that all may receive of its fulness (John i. 16), yet not the fulness itself.

You have already divined, dearest brethren, unless I mistake, to whom I allude under the image of an Aqueduct which, receiving the fulness of the Fountain from the Father's heart, has transmitted the same to us, if not as it is in itself, at least in so far as we could contain it. Yea, for you know to whom it was said, "Hail, full of grace" (Luke ii. 28). But shall

we not wonder how such and so great a Conduit could have been formed, the top of which—like the ladder which Jacob saw in vision (Gen. xxviii. 12)—was to reach to heaven, nay, to be lifted higher than the heavens, and to touch that Living Fountain of "the waters that are above the heavens" (Ps. cxlviii. 4)? Even Solomon wondered at this, and, as if despairing of the possibility, cried out, "who shall find a valiant woman" (Prov. xxxi. 10)? In fact the reason why the streams of heavenly grace did not begin to flow down upon the human race for so long a time was this: that the precious Conduit whereof I speak did not as yet mediate between God and man. Nor shall we be surprised that it was awaited for so many ages if we but remember how many years the just man was employed in building an ark "wherein a few, that is eight souls, were saved by water" (1 Peter iii. 20), and that only for a very short time.

But how did this Conduit of ours, this "valiant Woman," attain to the loftiness of the Fountain? How indeed, save by the ardour of her desires, by the fervour of her devotion, by the purity of her prayer? For it is written, "The prayer of a just man pierceth the clouds" (Ecclus. xxxv. 21). And who is just if not Mary, from whom the very Sun of justice has arisen upon us? How, then, did she reach up even to the inaccessible Majesty but by knocking, by asking, by seeking? (Matt. vii. 7). Yea, and she found what she was seeking, since to her it was said, "Thou hast found grace with God" (Luke i. 30). What? She was already "full of grace" and has she found yet more grace? Oh, she indeed deserved to find what she sought who was not satisfied with her own plenitude

nor content with her own abundance, but, according to that which is written, "They that drink Me shall yet thirst" (Ecclus. xxiv. 29)—solicited a superabundance that might suffice for the salvation of all. Hence the Archangel reassured her, saying, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee" (ibid. 35) and shall infuse into thy heart the precious balsam of His grace with such overflowing prodigality that it shall stream out on every side. So in truth it is, my brethren, such has been our own experience. For now at last are our "faces made cheerful with oil" (Ps. ciii. 15). Now we have begun to exclaim, "Thy name is as oil poured out" (Cant. i. 2) and "Thy memorial, O Lord, from generation to generation." Neither has this overflow been in vain: the oil poured out has not been wasted, since therefore even "young maidens," that is, souls young in virtue, have learned to love the Bridegroom "exceedingly" (Cant. i. 2), and the precious ointment, running down from the Head, has been communicated not alone to the beard, but even to the skirts of the garment (Ps. cxxxii. 2).

Behold, O man, the counsel of God; acknowledge the counsel of His wisdom, the counsel of His love. Designing to irrigate the floor with the dew of heaven, the Lord first poured down upon the fleece all the precious liquid (Judges vi. 37): designing to redeem the human race He placed the whole ransom in the hands of Mary. Wherefore this? Possibly in order that Mother Eve might be excused by her Daughter, and that the complaint of the man against the woman might be hushed for evermore. Never again, O Adam, never again shalt thou say to God, "The woman whom Thou gavest me to be my companion gave me of the

forbidden fruit" (Gen. iii. 12); but rather let thy words be henceforth: "The woman whom Thou gavest me fed me with the fruit of benediction." Here indeed we have a counsel full of love. But perchance we have not yet seen it all, perchance something remains still to be discovered. That which I have told you is true undoubtedly, yet—unless I am deceived—it is not enough to satisfy your desires. You have enjoyed the sweetness of the milk: perhaps if we labour the subject a little more we shall succeed in extracting therefrom the fatness of the butter.

Let us, therefore, look more deeply into this matter, and let us see with what sentiments of tender devotion the Lord would have us honour Mary, in whom He has placed the plenitude of all good; so that if there is anything of hope in us, if anything of grace, if anything of salvation, we may feel assured it has overflowed unto us from her who "went up from the desert flowing with delights" (Cant. viii. 5). Oh, truly may we call her a garden of delights, which the Divine "South Wind" not merely "comes and blows upon" (Cant. iv. 16), but comes down into and blows through, causing its aromatical spices, that is, the precious gifts of heavenly grace, to flow out and to be diffused abroad on every side. Remove from the heavens the material sun which enlightens the world, and what becomes of the day? Remove Mary, remove this Star of the sea, of life's "great and spacious sea" (Ps. ciii. 25), and what is left us but a cloud of involving gloom, and "the shadow of death" (Job x. 22), and a darkness exceeding dense?*

* This paragraph with a portion of the following is used for the lessons of the Votive Office of the Blessed Virgin in the Cistercian Breviary.—(Translator.)

Therefore, my dearest brethren, with every fibre, every feeling of our hearts, with all the affections of our minds, and with all the ardour of our souls, let us honour Mary, because such is the will of God, Who would have us to obtain everything through the hands of Mary. Such, I say, is the will of God, but intending our advantage. For exercising a provident care for us, her poor children, in all things and through all things, the Virgin Mother calms our trembling fear, enlivens our faith, strengthens our hope, drives away our distrust, raises up our pusillanimity. Thou wast afraid, O man, to approach the Father; thou wast terrified at the mere sound of His voice, and soughtest to conceal thyself amongst the foliage (Gen. iii. 8). Therefore He gave thee Jesus as thy Mediator. What shall not such a Son be able to obtain for thee from such a Father? Doubtless He shall be "heard for His reverence" (Heb. v. 7): for "the Father loveth the Son" (John iii. 35). Surely thou art not afraid of approaching Him also? "He is thy Brother and thy flesh" (Gen. xxxvii. 27), "tempted in all things like as thou art, but without sin" (Heb. iv. 15), "that He might become merciful" (Heb. ii. 17). Him Mary has given thee for thy Brother. But perhaps thou standest in awe of the Divine Majesty of Jesus? For although He has become man He has not ceased to be God. Perhaps thou desirest to have an advocate even with Him? If so, have recourse to Mary. In Mary human nature is found entirely pure, not alone pure from all defilement, but pure also from composition with another nature. Nor do I deem it doubtful that she likewise shall be heard for her reverence. Assuredly the Son will listen to the Mother and the

Father will listen to the Son. My little children, behold the sinner's ladder, behold the main source of my confidence, the principal ground of my hope. What? Can the Son refuse aught to His own Mother or be refused aught by His Father? Can the Son deny a hearing to her or be denied a hearing by Him? Both suppositions are plainly impossible. "Thou hast found grace with God," said the Archangel to Mary. Happy Virgin! Yes, dearest brethren, Mary shall always find grace with God, and grace alone is what we have need of. Prudent Virgin! she does not ask either wisdom, as did Solomon (3 Kings iii. 9), or riches, or honours, or power, but only grace. For it is by grace alone we shall be saved.

Wherefore then should we desire anything else? My brethren, let us seek grace and let us seek it through Mary. Through Mary, I say, because she always finds what she seeks and can never suffer a disappointment. Yes, let us seek grace, but "grace with God," for with men "grace is deceitful" (Prov. xxx. 31). Others may seek after merit, but let it be our endeavour to find grace. Why should it not be so? Is it not grace that has brought us hither? Undoubtedly, it is "the mercy of the Lord that we are not consumed" (Jer. Lam. iii. 22). For what are we? What but so many sinners, so many perjurers, murderers, robbers: what but "the refuse of this world and the offscouring of all?" (1 Cor. iv. 13).*

* This, of course, must not be taken literally, but in a spiritual sense : as in Sermon III. for the Epiphany we are told that to resist the inspirations of grace is to join with Herod and Pharao in slaughtering the Hebrew innocents. In the same way, any slight infidelity or feeling of vanity may be viewed as participating in the malice of perjury or theft. Or perhaps the holy Preacher had in mind the words of St.

Look into your own consciences, my brethren, and see that "where sin abounded grace hath abounded more" (Rom. v. 20). Mary did not presume on her merit but solicited grace. Indeed she depended so much upon grace and was so far from being "high-minded" (Rom. xi. 20) that the Angel's salutation alarmed her. "She was troubled at his saying and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be" (Luke i. 29). For she considered herself unworthy of this angelic greeting, and we may fancy her asking herself in the words of Elizabeth, "Whence is this to me that the Angel of my Lord should come to me?" (ibid. 43). But "fear not, Mary" (ibid. 30), and be not surprised at the coming of the Angel, for One greater than even Gabriel has come to thee. Wonder not at the presence of the Angel of the Lord, for the Lord of the Angel is also with thee. And, after all, what wonder is it that the Angel should show himself to thee who art already living an angelic life? What wonder is it that the Angel should visit one whose life is as heavenly as his own? What wonder, I say, that the Angel should salute "the fellow-citizens with the saints and the domestics of God" (Ephes. ii. 19)? For undoubtedly to live as a virgin is to lead an angelic life; and they who neither marry nor are given in marriage "shall be as the angels of God" (Matt. xxii. 30).

You perceive now, my brethren, that in this manner likewise our Aqueduct reached up to the Fountain of grace; that it was not by her prayer alone that Mary

Augustine: "There is no sin committed by any man which another would not also commit unless restrained by the grace of God" (Hom. 23).—(Translator.)

penetrated the heavens, but also by her incorruption, which, according to the Wise Man, "bringeth near to God" (Wisdom vi. 20). For she certainly was a "virgin holy in body and in spirit" (1 Cor. vii. 34), who had a better right than any other mere mortal to say, "Our conversation is in heaven" (Phil. iii. 20). Yes, "holy in body and in spirit," so that there might be no room for suspicion with regard to our Aqueduct. Exceedingly high though it is, it has preserved its integrity inviolate. This Virgin is in truth "a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up" (Cant. iv. 12), the living temple of the Lord, the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit. No foolish virgin is Mary, for not alone is she possessed of oil, but she has all the fulness of the oil stored up in her vessel (Matt. xxv. 3). "In her heart she hath disposed to ascend by steps" (Ps. lxxxiii. 6), mounting up not merely by her prayer, but also, as I have said, by the holiness of her conversation. Moreover, she "went into the hill country with haste and saluted Elizabeth" and remained ministering to her "about three months" (Luke i. 39, 40, 56); so that the Mother could have said then what the Son shall say long after: "Suffer it to be so now, for so it becometh us to fulfil all justice" (Matt. iii. 15). Here indeed we behold her ascending the hill country, ascending the mystical mountains, for her "justice is as the mountains of God" (Ps. xxxv. 7). And so we have here the Virgin's third mode of ascent, the third strand of the "threefold cord" which "is not easily broken" (Eccles. iv. 12). Charity burned brightly in her seeking after grace, virginity shone resplendent in the immaculate purity of her flesh, whilst humility appeared sublime in her ministrations

to her cousin. I say, her humility appeared sublime: because if "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Matt. xxiii. 12), what can there be more sublime than the humility of Mary? Elizabeth was surprised to see her coming and exclaimed, "Whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" But let her be more surprised now when she learns that the Mother, like her Son, "has come not to be ministered unto but to minister" (Matt. xx. 28). Good reason therefore had the inspired singer, prophesying of Mary, to cry out in admiration, "who is she that ascendeth * as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array?" (Cant. vi. 9). She ascended indeed above the whole human race, she ascended even to the angelic choirs, yea, even these she left beneath her and soared high aloft above the whole celestial creation. For she must needs mount beyond the heavenly host in order to draw that living water which it is her destined office to pour down upon men.

"How shall this be done," she inquired of the Angel, "because I know not man?" (Luke i. 34). Oh, in truth she was "holy in body and in spirit," since, as her words imply, she was then a virgin inviolate with the purpose of always preserving her virginity intact. But the Angel in answer said to her, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee" (ibid. 35). Which may be paraphrased thus: "Do not ask me, O Virgin, how

* "Ascendit"—a reading I have been able to find nowhere else. The Vulgate has "progreditur," whilst in the Greek we find "ἐκκύπτουσα," "peeping forth," more appropriate to the dawn—(Translator.)

the divine purpose shall be accomplished; 'It is high and I cannot reach it' (Ps. cxxxviii. 6). 'the Holy Ghost, not any created spirit, 'shall come upon thee, and,' not I, but 'the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee.'" Be not content, O holy Virgin, to take thy stand even amongst the blessed angels; for the thirsting earth hopes to receive through thy hands a more excellent draught than it could ever expect from angelic ministrations. When thou hast passed a little beyond them, thou shalt find Him Whom thy soul loveth (Cant. iii. 4). I say "a *little* beyond them," not as forgetting that the Lord is exalted infinitely above His angelic creatures, but to signify the fact that between Him and them is found no intermediary. Ascend, therefore, O Virgin, above the Virtues and the Dominations, above the Cherubim also and the Seraphim; ascend to the very presence of Him of Whom they sing with mighty voice from choir to choir, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts" (Is. vi. 3). "And therefore also the Holy Which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke i. 35). The Fountain of wisdom is the Word of the Father Who dwelleth on high. This Divine Word will become man, O Virgin, through thy co-operation, so that He Who can say, "I am in the Father and the Father is in Me" (John xiv. 10) may be able to say also, "From God I have proceeded and come" (John viii. 42). "In the beginning was the Word" (John i. 1). Even then Wisdom's Well was full, but as yet only unto Itself. Hence the Evangelist immediately adds, "and the Word was with God" (ibid.), dwelling doubtless in "light inaccessible" (1 Tim. vi. 16). The Lord, too, even in the beginning,

was "thinking towards us thoughts of peace and not of affliction" (Jer xxix. 11). But, O Lord, these thoughts of Thine are hidden in Thy mind and we know not what sentiments Thou entertainest towards us. "For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counsellor?" (Rom. xi. 34). Therefore did Thy thoughts of peace materialise at last in works of peace: therefore was the Word made flesh and dwelleth among us (John i. 14) even now. Yes, He dwelleth "even now by faith in our hearts." (Ephes. iii. 17), He dwelleth in our memory, He dwelleth in our thought; He even descends so far as to dwell in our imagination.

Before the incarnation, how could man conceive any image at all of his Maker, unless perchance he represented Him in his heart under the image of an idol? For God was then unimaginable and inaccessible. He was altogether beyond the reach of sight and sensible conception. But now He would be better known, He would make Himself an object as well to our eyes as to our intellects. How so, do you ask? By showing Himself to us lying in the manger, reposing on His Virgin Mother's lap, preaching on the mountain, passing the night in prayer, suspended on the cross, pallid in death, "free among the dead" (Ps. lxxxvii. 6), ruling over hell, rising on the third day, exhibiting to His apostles the places of the nails as the memorials of His triumph, and lastly mounting up to the highest heavens in the sight of a multitude of the faithful. Now, which of these wonders cannot be made the subject of solid, loving, and sanctifying meditation? And whichsoever of them I reflect upon, I am thinking of my God, and I know that in them all He is *my* God. Dearest brethren,

I have called it wisdom to " meditate on these things " (1 Tim. iv. 15), and I have judged it prudence to " eructate the memory of the abundant sweetness " (Ps. cxliv. 7) which in these beautiful berries the priestly Rod (Num. xvii.) has produced : which Mary gathered on high and poured down abundantly upon us. On high, I say, she gathered this honey and above the sphere of the holy angels, for she received the Word from the Father's very heart, according to that which is written, " Day to Day uttereth the Word" (Ps. xviii. 3). Now the Father undoubtedly can be called by the name Day, since His Salvation, that is, Jesus the Son of God, is designated " Day from Day " (Ps. xcv. 2). Perhaps the name of Day can be given to the Virgin also ? Most certainly ; she is in fact a most beautiful Day, a Day of dazzling light " that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun. " Consider, therefore, how Mary was exalted as high as the holy angels by the fulness of her grace, and even higher than the angels by the coming down of the Holy Spirit upon her. There is charity in the angels ; they have purity also and humility : which of these virtues did not shine forth resplendent in Mary ? But this point has been already discussed and established as well as was possible to me. Let me now endeavour to show how she surpasses the angels. I ask then : " To which of the angels hath it been said at any time " (Heb. i. 5), " The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy That shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God ? " " Truth is sprung out of the earth " (Ps. lxxxiv. 12), not from the angelic creation ; and " nowhere doth

He take hold of the angels, but of the seed of Abrahom He taketh hold" (Heb. ii. 16). It is high honour for the angels to be the ministers of the Lord; but something far more sublime has Mary merited — to be the Lord's Mother. Her divine maternity, therefore, is the Virgin's supereminent glory, and by this singular prerogative she is "made so much better than the angels as she hath obtained a more excellent name than they" (Heb. i. 4), the name, that is, of Mother of God. This is the grace found by her who was already full of grace: that to her fervent charity, her unspotted virginity and her devout humility shoold be united the privilege of conceiving her Lord without human co-operation and bringing Him forth without pain. But there is something still more: not only did she conceive as a virgin and bring forth without experiencing the ordinary pains of parturition, but the Holy That was born of her is called and is in truth the Son of God.

For the rest, most dearly beloved, let us strive with all diligence, that the Word Who came forth unto us from the mouth of the Father and through the Virgin's womb shall not return to Him void (Is. lv. 11), but through the same holy Virgin let us render Him back "grace for grace" (John i. 16). Let us "eructate the memory of the abundance of His sweetness" (Ps. cxliv. 7) until it shall be given us to enjoy His presence, and let the rivers of grace return to their origin so that they may flow down upon us again in greater abundance (Eccles i. 7). For unless they revert to their fountain-head they shall be dried up; if we are found unfaithful in that which is little

we shall not deserve to receive that which is greater (Matt. xxv. 21). Little, doubtless, is the remembrance of God when compared to the delight of His presence, little in comparison with the object of our desires, although very great in comparison with our merits; it is far less than what we long for but far more than we deserve. Wisely, therefore, does the Spouse in the Canticle return no little thanks even for this little. For after saying to the Bridegroom, "Shew me, O Thou Whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou liest in the mid-day" (Cant. i. 6), and receiving but a comparatively slight consolation instead of the immense boon she had solicited; a taste of "the evening sacrifice" (Ps. cxl. 2) in lieu of the mid-day feast: far from murmuring and losing heart (as is commonly the case) she rather expresses her gratitude and shows herself in all things more fervent than ever. For well she knows that if she gives Him proof of fidelity under the shadow of remembrance she shall infallibly attain to the meridian light of His presence. Therefore "you that are mindful of the Lord, hold not your peace and give Him no silence" (Is. lxii. 6, 7). As for those who enjoy not the memory but the presence of the Lord: they do not need to be exhorted; and the words addressed to them by another Prophet: "Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Sion" (Ps. cxlvii. 1): belong rather to congratulation than to exhortation. But such as still "walk by faith" (2 Cor. v. 7) do require to be admonished not to "hold their peace" or to "give Him—their God—silence." For He, "the Lord God, will speak, He will speak peace unto His people, and unto His saints, and unto them that are converted

to the heart" (Ps. lxxxiv. 9). Yea, as "with the holy Thou wilt be holy, O Lord, and with the innocent man Thou wilt be innocent" (Ps. xvii. 26): so wilt Thou listen to him that listens to Thee and wilt speak to him that speaks to Thee. For, my brethren, if you "hold your peace" you thereby "give Him silence." But hold your peace from what? From the divine praises. Attend to the Prophet: "Hold not your peace and give Him no silence till He establish and till He put the praise of Jerusalem * upon the earth." "Joyful and decorous praise" (Ps. cxlvi. 1) is the praise of Jerusalem. Unless, forsooth, we are to suppose that the angelic citizens of Jerusalem delight in mutual compliments and, as men, deceive one another with foolish flattery (Ps. lxi. 10).

Almighty Father, may "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. vi. 10), so that "the praise of Jerusalem" may be established upon the earth. What is the case with us now? The blessed angels in the holy city above seek not glory from their brother-angels, whereas men here below desire to be praised by their fellow-men! What intolerable perversity! But let it belong only to such as "have not the knowledge of God" (1 Cor. xv. 34), to them that "have forgotten the Lord their God" (1 Kings xii. 9). As for "you that are mindful of the Lord, hold not your peace," desist not from His praise until it has been established and made perfect on the earth. There is, indeed, a

* So the Saint interprets the phrase "laudem Jerusalem," taking the indeclinable noun "Jerusalem" to be in the genitive case. But it is more probably in apposition with "laudem," and thus it was understood by the Douay Translators who have rendered: "Give Him no silence till He establish and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." The Greek is as ambiguous as the Latin.—(Translator.)

silence that cannot be blamed, nay, that rather merits commendation: just as there is speech also that is not good. Otherwise the Prophet would not have said, "It is good to wait with silence for the salvation of God" (Jer. Lam. iii. 26). It is laudable to restrain the tongue from boasting, from blasphemy, from murmuring and detraction. There is one that murmurs in his heart on account of the oppressiveness of his toil and "the burden of the day and the heats" (Matt. xx. 12) and finds fault with his superiors who "watch as being to render an account of his soul" (Heb. xiii. 17). Such murmuring is a loud clamour in the ears of God; but this clamour of an obdurate soul is more certain than any silence to hush the voice of the Word, which it suffers not to be heard. There is another who, through "pusillanimity of spirit" (Ps. liv. 9) fails in hope: such failure is the most wicked word of blasphemy which "shall not be forgiven neither in this world nor in the world to come" (Matt. xii. 32). There is yet another who loves to "walk in great matters and in wonderful things above him" (Ps. cxxx. 1), saying to himself, "Our mighty hand hath done all these things" (Deut. xxxii. 27), "thinking himself to be something whereas he is nothing" (Gal. vi. 3). What can He Who "speaketh peace unto His people" (Ps. lxxxiv. 9) have to say to such a one? For this soul has no need of Him: "I am rich," she says, "and made wealthy and have need of nothing" (Apoc. iii. 17). Now Truth Itself has said, "Woe to you that are rich, for you have your consolation" (Luke vi. 24); and also, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matt. v. 5). Therefore let us have peace within our souls

from the censorious tongue, from the blasphemous tongue, and from the boastful tongue, because "it is good to wait with this threefold silence for the salvation of God." Yes, for then one can say, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth" (1 Kings iii. 10). The three tongues just mentioned speak not *to* but *against* the Lord. Hence Moses could say to the malcontents, "Your murmuring is not against us but against the Lord" (Exod. xvi. 8).

But, dearest brethren, although you must be silent from murmuring, from diffidence, and from boasting, be sure not to hold your peace altogether "and give Him no silence." Instead of boasting, speak to the Lord in self-accusation, that you may obtain forgiveness for the past. Instead of murmuring, speak to Him in thanksgiving, that you may receive more abundant grace in the present. And instead of losing heart, speak to Him in prayer, that you may obtain the gift of glory in the future. Confess, I say, your offences in the past, return thanks for present benefits, and then pray with all earnestness for the gifts of the future, so that He may not keep silent with regard to the forgiveness of your sins, the infusion of grace, and the promise of eternal glory in the life to come. "Hold not your peace and give Him no silence." Speak to Him so that He in turn may speak to you and each of you may be able to say with the Spouse in the Canticle, "My Beloved to me and I to Him" (Cant. ii. 16). A sweet voice this and a pleasant word. It certainly is not the voice of a murmurer, it is rather the voice of a turtle-dove. Ask me no longer, "how shall we sing the songs of the Lord in a strange land?" (Ps. cxxxvi. 4). For that land has ceased to be

reputed strange whereof the Bridegroom Himself says, "The voice of the turtle is heard in *our* land" (Cant. ii. 12). The Bride had heard Him say, "Catch us the little foxes that destroy the vines" (ibid. 15); and perhaps it was this that caused her to break out into the cry of exultation: "My Beloved to me and I to Him." This voice is in truth the voice of a turtle, which, being singularly chaste in its habits, perseveres in fidelity to its mate, whether living or dead: just as "neither death nor life" can separate His Spouse from the love of Christ (Rom. viii. 38). And see whether anything has been able to alienate this beloved Bridegroom from the Bride so dear to His Heart and cause Him to abandon her even when she sinned and forsook Him. A great gathering of clouds strove to intercept the light of heaven—for our iniquities made a division between us and our God (Is. lix. 2)—but the Sun of justice put forth His ardent influence and melted them all. For when wouldst thou, O religious soul, have come back to Him had He not remained constant in His love of thee, had He not cried after thee, "Return, return, O Sulamitess: return, return that We may behold thee" (Cant. vi. 12)? Therefore, do thou likewise continue faithful to Him, so faithful that no affliction or labours shall evermore have power to frighten thee away.

My brother, thou must, like Jacob, wrestle with the Angel and not allow thyself to be overcome, because "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent bear it away" (Matt. xi. 12). "My Beloved to me and I to Him"—what is this but wrestling? He has given proof of His love for thee; let Him now have proof of thine. The Lord thy God puts thee to

the trial in divers manners. Often He turns away His face and declines from His servant, but not in wrath (Ps. xxvi. 9). This belongs to thy probation; it is no sign of reprobation. Thy Beloved has been patient with thee; do thou in thy turn be patient with Him: "Do manfully and wait for the Lord" (ibid. 9). Thy sins were not able to conquer His patience. Therefore let not His chastisements conquer thine and so shalt thou obtain a blessing. But when? At the dawn, when "the day breaks and the shadows retire" (Cant. ii. 17), when He has "established the praise of Jerusalem on the earth" "Behold," so we read, "a man wrestled with him (Jacob) till morning" (Gen. xxxii. 24). O Lord, "cause me to hear Thy mercy in the morning, for in Thee have I hoped" (Ps. cxlii. 8). I will not hold my peace nor will I give Thee any silence until the break of dawn. Would I might also say that I will give Thee no fast! For Thou dost condescend even so far as to feed, but only "among the lilies." "My Beloved to me," says the Spouse, "and I to Him Who feedeth among the lilies" (Cant. ii. 16). This fits in very well with what we find earlier in the same Canticle, where, if you remember, the first appearance of the flowers is said to synchronise with the first sound of the turtle's voice (ibid. 12). Yet notice that the Spouse does not inform us *what* her Beloved feeds on, but only indicates the *place* of His feeding; she tells us *where* He eats His food without explaining *what* the food is. Perhaps we are to suppose that He finds His refreshment not so much in the actual eating of the lilies as in being amongst them: that He loves to be surrounded with lilies, even though He does not make them His food. For lilies please

us rather by their odour than by their taste and they are more capable of satisfying the eye than the appetite.*

The Beloved, therefore, "feedeth among the lilies till the day break," and to the loveliness of the flowers there succeeds the richness of the fruits. For the present life is the season for flowers rather than for fruits, since we have to be satisfied with hope without possession; and whilst "we walk by faith and not by sight" (2 Cor. v. 7) our joy comes more from the expectation than from the actual fruition of good. Consider, I pray you, the fragility of these flowers, and recollect the Apostle's admonition: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Cor. iv. 7). Oh, how many dangers do we not see threatening the flowers of virtue! How easily they can be punctured by the points of the thorns that surround them! Not without cause, therefore, does the Beloved sing: "As the lily among the thorns, so is My love among the daughters" (Cant. ii. 2). Surely a "lily among the thorns" was the soul that said, "With them that hated peace I was peaceful" (Ps. cxix. 7). But "although the just man springeth forth as the lily" (Ps. xci. 13; Osee xiv. 6), not where there is but one lily will the Bridegroom deign to feed, for He takes no delight in singularity. Listen to what He says Himself, He Who makes His home among the lilies: "Where there are two or three gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii. 20). Mark: "in the midst." Jesus always loves the middle place; the Son of man, the "Mediator of God and men" (1 Tim. ii. 5) shows a constant dislike for holes and

* Cf. Sermons LXX.-LXXI. on the Canticle of Canticles.

corners.* "My Beloved to me and I to Him Who feedeth among the lilies." Dearest brethren, let us take care to have our souls adorned with lilies; let us hasten to root out the "thorns and thistles" (Gen. iii. 18) and to plant lilies in their place; perchance then the Beloved will sometime show Himself so condescending as to come to feed even in us.

Needless to say, He was wont to feed in Mary, and that the more abundantly in proportion to the multitude of lilies He found in her. What but a lily was the splendour of her virginity? What but lilies the glory of her humility and the supereminence of her charity? Yet we also, my brethren, can possess lilies, although of a far inferior kind. But even amongst these the Bridegroom will not disdain to feed: if yet the cheerfulness of our devotion beautifies those acts of thanksgiving whereof I have already spoken, if purity of intention brightens our prayer, if our con-

* It is interesting to note how often and how variously Jesus is assigned the middle place. As the Second Person of the Divinity, He occupies the middle place between the Father and the Holy Ghost; as the Logos, the uncreated Image of God (Col. i. 15), He can be said to mediate between God and the visible creation; and He is the one appointed Mediator between God and man. He was born at midnight, He was laid in the manger in the midst of the animals—"expavi in medio duorum animalium" as the Church sings in her Christmas office—He was found "sitting in the midst of the doctors" (Luke ii. 46), He "wrought salvation in the midst of the earth" (Ps. lxxiii. 12), He promised that where two or three are gathered together in His name He will be in the midst of them (Matt. xviii. 20), He stood in the midst of the people that knew Him not (John i. 26), He passed through the midst of his enemies (Luke iv. 30), "They crucified Him and with Him two others, one on each side and Jesus in the midst" (John xix. 18), after the resurrection He is often described as appearing in the midst of the disciples (Luke xxiv. 36; John xx. 19, 26), St. Paul represents Him as being in the midst of the church (Heb. ii. 12), and John saw Him in the midst of the golden candlesticks (Apoc. i. 13, ii. 1) and of the throne (v. 6, vii. 17).—(Translator.)

fession is rendered white, so to speak, by the grace of forgiveness; according to that which is written: "If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow, and if they be red as crimson they shall be white as wool" (Is. i. 18).

But, my brother, whatsoever thou hast a mind to offer to the Lord be sure to entrust it to Mary, so that thy gift shall return to the Giver of all grace through the same channel by which thou didst obtain it. God of course had the power, if He so pleased, to communicate His grace without the interposition of this Aqueduct. But he wanted to provide us with a needful intermediary. For perhaps "thy hands are full of blood" (Is. i. 15) or dirtied with bribes: perhaps thou hast not like the Prophet "shaken them free from all gifts" (Is. xxxiii. 15). Consequently, unless thou wouldst have thy gift rejected, be careful to commit to Mary the little thou desirest to offer, that the Lord may receive it through her hands, so dear to Him and most "worthy of all acceptation" (1 Tim. i. 15). For Mary's hands are the very whitest of lilies; and assuredly the Divine Lover of lilies will never complain of anything presented by His Mother's hands that is not found among the lilies. Amen.

SERMON PREACHED BEFORE THE CISTERCIAN ABBOTS ASSEMBLED AT CITEAUX, THE MOTHER-HOUSE OF THE ORDER, FOR THE GENERAL CHAPTER.

On the Three Ways to Heaven followed by the Three Classes of Christians.

"*Charity from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and an unfeigned faith.*"—1 Tim. i. 5.

Brethren, "this great and wide-extended sea" (Ps. ciii. 25)—by which the Psalmist obviously wished to designate "the present wicked world" (Gal. i. 4), full of bitterness and tumult—can be crossed by three classes of persons, "so that they may pass over delivered" (Is. li. 10), each in its own particular way. The classes in question are represented and typified by Noe, Daniel, and Job. Of these, the first crosses in a ship, the second on a bridge, the third by wading through the shallows. Observe now in what manner these three individuals are types of the three orders of Christians. Noe, as you are aware, steered his ark over the waters of the deluge, so that it might not be submerged in the flood; wherein manifestly he typified the rulers of the Church; Daniel, "a man of desires" (Dan. ix. 23), distinguished for his fasting and chastity, represents the order of the continent and the penitent, who live to God alone; whilst Job, in holy wedlock, wisely dispensing the wealth of this

world, stands for the ordinary faithful who may hold earthly goods in lawful possession. I purpose to speak to-day of the first and second orders, because there are present my venerable brother-abbots of the order of prelates, and likewise some simple religious belonging to the order of penitents: not that I think we abbots ought to esteem ourselves as outside this latter order, unless perchance—which God forbid!—we allow our office to make us unmindful of our profession. As for the third order, that, namely, of married persons, it is not necessary to dwell at length upon it, as it does not particularly concern us. It consists of those who for the most part cross the wide sea of this world by fording, having beyond doubt a difficult and dangerous, yea, and a very long road to traverse, inasmuch as they can make no "short-cuts." The danger of this road is manifest from the fact that so many, to our sorrow, seem to perish in it, whilst only very few appear to complete the journey by that way without some mishap. For it is a very difficult matter, particularly in our own times, when malice so much abounds, to avoid the whirlpools of passion and the gulfs of deadly sin amidst the wild waves of the world's restless ocean.

Those who belong to the order of the continent cross over, as I have said, on a bridge, which everyone recognises to be the shortest and easiest and also the safest mode of crossing. I shall omit eulogy, however, and confine myself to the more important business of pointing out the dangers that must be encountered even in this way; for such I judge to be by far the wiser course and the more profitable for you. Straight, no doubt, dearest brethren, is the way wherein you

are walking, and far more secure than the way of those who are united in wedlock. Yet it is not entirely secure. There are three dangers to be feared in it: lest perhaps someone should be tempted to walk abreast with his brother,* or to look back, or at least to stand still if not to sit down in the middle of the bridge. Now, too narrow is that bridge and too "strait the way that leadeth to life" (Matt. vii. 14) to allow of any of these actions. Therefore, against the first of these dangers let us pray, one and all, in the words of the Royal Prophet: "Let not the foot of pride come to me for there the workers of iniquity are fallen" (Ps. xxxv. 12, 13). With regard to him who, having put his hand to the plough, turns around to look back (Luke ix. 62), he certainly shall stumble and be swallowed down at once and the sea shall "cover his head" (Jonas ii. 6). There is next the case of him who wishes to stand, not by openly apostatising from the order, but by neglecting to make progress in monastic perfection. He, too, is inevitably destined to fall, "being pushed and overturned" (Ps. cxvii. 13) by those that come after. For the path of life is so very narrow that by standing still he becomes an obstacle in the way of such as desire to press on and to make progress. Hence it is that they are always reproving and upbraiding him, that they cannot have patience with his tepidity and sloth, that they endeavour to urge him onward with goads, so to speak, and pushes. The result is that such a religious finds himself obliged to one or other

* That is, to compare himself with, to consider himself as good as his brother instead of choosing the lowest place as the Lord recommends (Luke xiv. 10).—(Translator.)

of two things : either to advance or to give up altogether. Consequently one must never halt in this way ; and it is much less expedient either to look back or to walk side by side with another. Rather ought we to run forward and to hasten on our way with all humility, lest otherwise we should perhaps fall far behind Him Who hath gone forth " exulting as a giant to run His course " (Ps. xviii. 6), and Whom, if we are prudent, we shall " set always in our sight " (Ps. xv. 8), so that, drawn by the odour of His ointments, we may run after Him (Cant. i. 3) with greater ease and alacrity.

Nor have we any need to fear that the way over the bridge shall be found too narrow for such as desire to run therein. Our bridge is constructed of three kinds of materials, upon which we can lean with our whole weight, without any danger of our foot slipping. The materials are these : bodily mortification, poverty with regard to worldly goods, and humble obedience. For it is written, " Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God " (Acts xiv. 21) ; also, " They that desire to become rich fall into temptation and into the snare of the devil " (1 Tim. vi. 9) ; and he whom disobedience has banished from the presence of God must doubtless return to Him by the straight path of obedience.* But the materials must be properly compacted together. For bodily mortification cannot easily be kept up amidst riches, or practised with discretion without the restraint of obedience ; poverty

* " Receive with pleasure and faithfully comply with the admonitions of thy loving Father, that by pursuing the toilsome path of obedience thou mayest return to Him from Whom thou hast departed by the slothful way of disobedience."—Preface to the Holy Rule of St. Benedict.

is of no value and has no merit in the sight of God when accompanied with sensual indulgence and attachment to self-will; whilst the obedience of him who abounds in riches and pleasures is neither stable nor anything very glorious.

But when these three materials have been duly tempered, consider, brethren, if you have not entirely escaped the three principal dangers of this far-spreading sea, namely, "the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John ii. 16). Mind, I say, "when duly tempered," in order to put you upon your guard against every element of discontent in your mortification, of covetousness in your poverty, of self-will in your obedience. For those who murmured against Moses were slain by the fiery serpents (Num. xxi. 6), and "they that desire to become rich fall into temptation and into the snare of the devil"—observe, the Apostle does not say, "they that are rich," but, "they that desire to become rich." But how are we anything better than earthly-minded men, if—which God forbid!—we covet the things of our poverty with not less but perhaps greater eagerness of desire than they do the wealth of this world? What matters it whether that which is sought after be of greater or lesser value so long as the affection is equally corrupt? Indeed the cupidity of the worldling appears to be the more excusable, as having for its object goods of comparatively greater worth. Again, whosoever strives by open or secret means to induce the spiritual father to enjoin upon him that which most pleases himself, such a religious is labouring under a serious delusion if he fancies he is exercising the virtue of obedience. For manifestly,

it is not he who now obeys the superior, but it is rather the superior who obeys him.

But since the Saviour has said, " In what measure you shall mete it shall be measured to you again " (Mark iv. 24), it is well for a man to offer these things with generosity, so that he may belong to the number of those to whom " they shall give into their bosoms good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over " (Luke vi. 38). It is sufficient for salvation to endure corporal afflictions with patience ; but it is generosity to welcome them gladly and with fervour of soul. It is enough not to seek superfluities, and not to murmur on account of even necessaries if perchance they be lacking ; but it is generosity to rejoice at their absence and to seek rather how another may have what is needful and oneself suffer want. Again, it is sufficient for salvation to accept what is enjoined, provided one does not endeavour by a show of discontent or any sort of simulation to change the superior's will and so to bring him round to that which one is bent upon ; but it is the part of generosity to avoid whatever is gratifying to self-love, so far, that is, as it can be done with a good conscience.

Now, with regard to superiors themselves, these are " they that go down to the sea in ships, doing their work in great waters " (Ps. cvi. 23). They are not confined to any one way, whether by ford or bridge, but are free to move in all directions, so that they may assist each of their subjects as they are bound to do, guide their steps across bridge-way and shallow, preserve order in the moving ranks, discover and guard against hidden dangers, arouse the lukewarm, and sustain the weak. Verily, " they mount up to the

heavens and they go down into the depths" (ibid. 26), at one time treating of matters sublime and celestial, at another discussing things hellish and horrible. But, brethren, where can we find a ship strong enough to withstand the force of such mighty billows, and able to pass securely through dangers so great? Only in charity: "for love is strong as death, zeal is hard as hell," because, as the Bridegroom goes on to say, "many waters cannot quench charity" (Cant. viii. 6, 7). Necessary, my brethren, indispensably necessary to all superiors, is this ship of charity, which like all other ships has three sides, conformably to the requirements of St. Paul: "Charity is from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and an unfeigned faith" (1 Tim. i. 5). The superior, therefore, ought to have a pure heart, that is, a pure intention, in so far forth that he desires to make himself appear rather the servant than the lord of his subjects, never using his office as a means to advance his own personal interests or worldly honour, or for any other object whatever except the glory of God and the salvation of souls. But with purity of intention he must unite irreproachable conduct, so that "being made a pattern of the flock from the heart" (1 Peter v. 3) he may like his Master "begin to do and to teach" (Acts i. 1); and according to the Rule of our holy father, St. Benedict (Holy Rule, ch. ii.), whatsoever things he declares to be contrary to the eternal interests of his monks, let him also teach by example that the same ought to be avoided: lest otherwise, when reproving a brother, it might perhaps be said to him, "Physician, heal thyself" (Luke iv. 23). The superior who gives occasion for such criticism as this calls down upon himself a

heavy sentence of damnation and exposes his religious to utter ruin. It is not as holding myself irreprehensible in this matter that I speak to you thus. No, my brethren, but because to me and to you alike Truth cries aloud: "It behoveth a prelate to be blameless" (1 Tim. iii. 1), so that he may be able, like his Lord, with a secure conscience to "answer them that reproach him in any thing" (Ps. cxviii. 42): "which of you shall convince me of sin?" (John viii. 46). I do not say that we can be absolutely without sin in this wretched life, but that the superior is bound to avoid with all possible care those faults which he reproves in his subjects.

For this reason he is obliged to be in his secret thought such as he shows himself in his outward conduct; lest otherwise he should be found exteriorly humble and elated in heart, presuming on his own wisdom, virtue, and sanctity. That undoubtedly would be a "feigned faith," when, namely, despite an external show of humility, one does not really put all his trust in the pure mercy of God. And observe how admirably in keeping with what he says about purity of intention, faith unfeigned, and a good conscience are those other words of the great Apostle: "But to me it is a very small thing to be judged by you or by man's day; but neither do I judge my own self; for I am not conscious to myself of anything, yet am I not hereby justified; but He That judgeth me is the Lord (1 Cor. iv. 3, 4). "Neither do I judge my own self," he says, "for I am not conscious to myself of anything, that is, of seeking in anything my own personal interests instead of what belongs to Jesus Christ (Phil. ii. 21). And to me it is a very small thing to be judged by

you, because my conscience is good and my life irreproachable." Then he adds, "but He That judgeth me is the Lord," in order to teach us that in Him alone he has put all his trust, being "humbled under the mighty hand of God" (1 Peter v. 6). Consider this also: whether the triple interrogation of Peter by the Lord cannot reasonably be understood with reference to the same three essentials of true charity, so that the repeated question: "Lovest thou Me? lovest thou Me? lovest thou Me?" (John xxi. 15-17) signifies the same as: lovest thou Me with a pure intention, and with a good conscience, and with faith unfeigned? And surely not without good cause was he who was to be made a "fisher of men" (Matt. iv. 19) interrogated thus as to whether he had charity in the constitution of his ship.

FIRST SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF ST. MICHAEL, ARCHANGEL.

(September 29th.)

On the Difference between the Angelic Ministry and the Ministry of Christ.

"*Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?*"—Heb. i. 14.
"*The Son of man is not come to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a redemption for many.*"—Matt. xx. 28.

To-day, dearest brethren, we celebrate a feast in honour of the holy angels, and you think you have a right to demand a sermon from me on so important a solemnity. But wretched little worm that I am, how shall I presume to speak of those celestial spirits? I believe and hold with most undoubting faith that they, gladdened by the presence and by the vision of God, rejoice evermore in "the good things of the Lord" (Ps. xxvi. 13) which "eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man" to conceive (1 Cor. ii. 9). How then shall a man speak to men of what he is as incapable of conceiving as they of understanding? If it be true that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. xii. 34), he doubtless ought to hold his tongue whose mind is empty of thought. However, if it is impossible for me to discourse on the happiness and glory which the angels enjoy in themselves or rather in the Lord their God, and which

utterly transcends my powers of conception, let me at least say something about their kindness and charity towards us. For these exalted creatures show themselves not less amiable by their condescension than they are admirable by their state. It is fitting therefore, brethren, that as their glory is incomprehensible to us, we should all the more eagerly embrace the loving-kindness which, as we know, abounds in these "domestics of God" (Ephes. ii. 19), these citizens of heaven, these princes of paradise. We have it on the testimony of the Apostle who was rapt up to the third heaven (2 Cor. xii. 2) that "they are all ministering spirits, sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation" (Heb. i. 14).

This ought not to appear incredible to anyone who considers that the Creator and King of the angels has Himself come likewise "not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life a redemption for many" (Matt. xx. 28). For why should an angel disdain as unworthy of him that ministry in which he has the example of the great Lord Whom it is his delight and His happiness to minister to in heaven? But lest this also might appear doubtful to anyone, "he that saw it hath given testimony" (John xix. 35), saying, "Thousands of thousands ministered to Him and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before Him" (Dan. vii. 10); and another Prophet says, speaking to the Father of the Son, "Thou hast made Him a little less than the angels" (Ps. viii. 6). Thus, my brethren, thus indeed it was becoming that He who surpassed the angels in majesty should surpass them no less in humility, that He should make Himself "lower than the angels" (Heb. ii. 9) in proportion

as He assumed to Himself an inferior ministry: He Who is "so much better than the angels as He hath inherited a more excellent name than they" (Heb. i. 4). But perhaps you would now like to ask me in what does He seem to have been made less than the angels by coming to minister to us, since, as I have already mentioned, they too have been sent to minister? The difference lies in the fact that He not alone ministered but was ministered Himself unto us, so that the Minister and what He ministered were one and the same. Rightly therefore does the spouse sing in the Canticle of Canticles, "Behold He cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping over the hills" (Cant. ii. 8). That is to say, He leaped with the angels by ministering like them, but skipped over them in that He alone was ministered. The angels minister indeed, yet not of their own. They offer to the Lord for us, not their own, but our good works, and bring us back in return His graces. This is the reason why the Scripture, when telling us how "the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended up before God from the hand of the angel," is careful to premise, "And there was given to him much incense" (Apoc. viii. 3, 4). For the sweat and the tears that they offer to God belong not to them but to us, and for us also and not for them are the graces and gifts they come back with.

Not so that Minister Who, surpassing all in the loftiness of His majesty, surpassed them not less in the lowliness of His humility. For He immolated Himself as "a sacrifice of praise" (Ps. xlix. 14), offering His life to the Father and ministering to us His Flesh, even to this day. No wonder then if the holy angels

condescend, yea and delight, to serve us for the sake of so noble a Minister. For they love us because we have been loved so much by Christ. It is a common saying, "He that loves me loves also my dog." We, O happy spirits, we are the poor little dogs of that mighty Lord Whom you love with such ardent affection. Yes, we are the whelps that desire to "eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters" (Matt. xv. 27), that is, from your table, O blessed ones. I have said this, most dearly beloved, so that for the future you may have greater confidence in the holy angels, and may consequently invoke their assistance with more assurance in all your necessities; also that you may strive to live more worthily in their presence, to conciliate their favour always more and more, to merit their good-will, to impetrate their compassionate kindness. And I think it necessary for the same object to suggest to your charity two additional motives which, as it seems to me, make the angels solicitous for our infirmity: without any uneasiness, of course, on their side, but not without much profit to us; with not the least prejudice to their felicity, but with the greatest advantage to our salvation.

It is evident, then, and indubitable, that human souls, endowed as they are with intelligence and with a capacity for the enjoyment of bliss, have a natural affinity—if I may presume to say it—to the holy angels. Therefore, O ye happy spirits, you ought not to act against the prescription of the law by despising your own race, which you are bound to visit * (Job

* "Visitans speciem tuam non peccatis." The sense of this text is very obscure. It is rendered by the Douay Translators: "Visiting thy beauty thou shalt not sin." The word "species"

v. 24), even though, as you yourselves can perceive, it has fallen into utter dishonour. Neither can I suppose it possible for you, citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, to take delight in the ruin of your city and in the dilapidated condition of its walls, which you behold full of breaches. But if you desire its restoration, as you ought, repeat often, I beg of you, before the throne of glory, the words of this prayer: "Deal favourably, O Lord, in Thy good will with Sion, that the walls of Jerusalem may be built up" (Ps. l. 20). If you love the beauty of the house of the Lord (Ps. xxv. 8), or rather because you do love it so sincerely, exercise your zeal in behalf of the living and rational stones (1 Peter ii. 5), which alone are capable of being built into your walls for the repairing of the ruins thereof.

Here, then, most dearly beloved, you have the threefold chord, difficult to break (Eccles. iv. 12), which "from the high habitation of heaven" (Deut. xxvi. 15) draws down the inconceivable charity of the angels to console us, to visit us, and to help us in our need; and that for God's sake, for our sake, for their own sake too. For God's sake, because they desire to imitate the infinite mercifulness of His dealings with us; for our sake, because they recognise and compassionate in us a resemblance to themselves; for their own sake,

can signify either "race" or "beauty," and neither the Greek nor the Hebrew helps to determine its signification here. The term used in the Hebrew means "habitation," whilst in the Septuagint Greek we find quite a different reading altogether: "ἡ δὲ δίαιτα τῆς σκηνῆς σου οὐ μὴ ἁμάρτῃ." (The style of living in thy tent shall not offend.) St. Bernard appears to be following St. Gregory the Great, who writes: "Speciem suam visitat quisquis ad eum, quem similem sibi per naturam conspicit, passibus amoris tendit" (*Mor.*, l. vi. c. xvi.).—(Translator.)

because they long with most ardent desire to see the gaps in their ranks again filled up. For it is "out of the mouth of infants and of sucklings"—that is, of those who have still to be fed with spiritual milk, unable as yet to eat solid food,—that the praise of the Divine Majesty must be "perfected" (Matt. xxi. 16). It has been begun by the angelic spirits who are already crowned with the fulness of joy and happiness, but they await our advent with the utmost eagerness because of the vehemence of their desire and longing to see its consummation and ultimate perfection.

Such being the case, consider, dearest brethren, how solicitous we ought to be to show ourselves worthy of such noble company and so to live in the sight of the holy angels that they shall see nothing in our conduct to displease them. For woe to us if ever it should happen that, provoked by our sins and indifference, they deem us undeserving of their visits and society! Then, in truth, we shall be obliged to lament and to say with the Prophet, "My friends and my neighbours have drawn near and stood against me, and they that were near me stood afar off; and they that sought my soul used violence" (Ps. xxxvii. 12, 13), because, namely, those had withdrawn who could have protected me by their presence and beaten off my enemies. If, then, we find the companionship of the condescending angels so necessary for us, we ought carefully to avoid everything that could displease them and to cultivate those virtues particularly in which we know they take particular delight. Now there are many things which afford them pleasure and which they are glad to discover in us such as

sobriety, chastity, voluntary poverty, frequent sighs to God, prayers offered up with contrite tears and a pure intention of the heart. But above and beyond all these, unity and peace "the angels of peace" (Is. xxxiii. 7) demand from us. What wonder is it that they should show a special love for those virtues which represent, as it were, in us the form of their own supernal city and exhibit for their admiration a new Jerusalem on earth*? I say, then: that just as all things are in common in the city of the blessed (Ps. cxxi. 3), so ought we to think and speak alike and have no divisions amongst us (1 Cor. i. 10), but rather to show that we are all, collectively, one body in Christ and members individually one of another (1 Cor. xii. 27).

But if concord is especially pleasing to the angels, there is nothing, on the other hand, which would cause them so much displeasure and so excite their indignation as dissensions and scandals, if haply they discovered any here. For let us attend to what St. Paul says, writing to the Corinthians: "Whereas there is among you envying and contention; are you not carnal and walk according to man?" (1 Cor. iii. 3). And in the Epistle of the Apostle St. Jude we read thus: "These are they who separate themselves, sensual men, having not the Spirit" (Jude 19). You perceive how the human soul communicates life to all the members of the body so long as they remain united to each other. But separate one from the rest and see whether it shall continue to enjoy the influence of the animating principle. Such is the state of every man that "saith anathema to Jesus" (1 Cor. xii. 3): the which "no

* Jerusalem means Virgin of Peace.

one saith, speaking by the Spirit of God" (ibid.), because anathema means separation.* Such, I say, is the condition of everyone that separates himself from the unity of the brotherhood; there can be no doubt that the Spirit of life has withdrawn from him. With good reason, therefore, do the Apostles describe the contentious and such as separate themselves from the community as "carnal" and "sensual men, having not the Spirit." Accordingly, the holy and blissful angels say, whenever they find dissensions and scandals, "What have we to do with this generation which is devoid of the Spirit? For if it had the Spirit, charity would be poured forth by Him (Rom. v. 5) in the hearts of all and concord would have remained inviolate." And they add, "We will not remain any longer with these men because they are flesh (Gen. vi. 3). For 'what fellowship hath light with darkness?' (2 Cor. vi. 14). We belong to the realms of unity and peace, and it was our hope that these men could be brought to the same peace and unity. But now, being at variance with each other, how is it possible for them to be united with us?"

And see, my brethren, how appropriate is the Gospel appointed for the present solemnity, in which the Lord restrains us so powerfully from scandalising the little ones, by reminding us of their angels, whom such scandals so greatly displease. "He that shall

* According to the holy Preacher, therefore, a religious "says anathema to Jesus," that is, separates himself from Jesus and salvation, when by his singularities he separates himself from the community wherein Jesus abides, as He has Himself declared: "Where there are two or three gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii. 20). —(Translator.)

scandalise one of these little ones that believe in Me" —terrible in truth are the words which follow—(Matt. xviii. 6). But the time for beginning Mass is already gone by. Excuse me, therefore, for making here an interruption; which indeed may not be without profit if the postponement enables me to pursue my present subject more diligently in a future discourse.

SECOND SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF ST. MICHAEL.

On Scandal.

"He that shall scandalise one of these little ones that believe in Me, it were better for him that a mill-stone should be hanged about his neck and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea. . . . And if thy hand or thy foot scandalise thee cut it off and cast it from thee. . . . And if thy eye scandalise thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee."—Matt. xviii. 6-9.

You have heard, most dearly beloved, in to-day's Gospel lesson the Lord's terrible denunciation of those who scandalise the little ones. He Who is Truth Itself flatters no man, He fawns upon no man, He deceives no man, but fearlessly thunders forth: "Woe to that man by whom scandal cometh" (Matt. xviii. 7). "It were better for him," He says of a great scandal-giver, "if that man had not been born" (Matt. xxvi. 24). "Better for him," that is, if he had not been "born again" (John iii. 3), if he had not been born unto the life of grace, "born of the Spirit" (ibid. 8), because, namely, he was afterwards "consummated in the flesh" (Gal. iii. 3). And if there is anyone here who is a cause of scandal in this house, in this holy community, so pleasing to God, so favoured with the love and companionship of His angels: "it were better for him also that a mill-stone should be hanged about his neck" (Matt. xviii. 6) and, with a crushing weight of worldly desires laid upon his shoulders instead of the sweet and light yoke of the Saviour (Matt. xi. 30), "that he should be drowned in the

depth of the sea" (Matt. xviii. 6), of "this great sea which stretcheth wide its arms" (Ps. ciii. 25), by which doubtless we are to understand the "present wicked world" (Gal. i. 4). For his doom would be less terrible if he were lost, not in religion, but in secular life; and he cannot but be lost whosoever is without charity, even though he should deliver his body to be burned (1 Cor. xiii. 3). If I address you thus, dearest brethren, it is not because I have a low esteem of your charity or because I have any reason to suspect that the opposite and most hateful vice has obtained dominion over you, but that you may be solicitous to persevere in the charity, in the concord, and in the peace wherein you now "stand in the Lord" (1 Thes. iii. 8) and "that you may abound the more" (1 Thes. iv. 1). "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of glory?" (1 Thes. ii. 19). What indeed but your unity and unanimity by which, as I rejoice to see, you prove yourselves "lovers of the brotherhood" (1 Peter iii. 8), "before all things having a constant mutual charity in yourselves" (1 Peter iv. 8), for charity is "the bond of perfection" (Col. iii. 14). Therefore I beseech you, most dearly beloved, "so stand fast in the Lord" (Phil. iv. 1). For "by this shall all men know—yea, and even the holy angels—that you are the disciples of Christ, if you have love one for another" (John xiii. 35).

Now, if you remember from my last discourse the three motives I assigned for the angels' love and solicitude for us, you will be able from that viewpoint to form a very magnificent estimate of the worth of fraternal charity. For it is easy to understand that in him who loves not his neighbour the angels can

find none of the motives aforesaid. How could they love us for Christ's sake if our lack of mutual charity made it evident to them that we were not His disciples at all? How could they love us for our own sakes, that is, on account of the spiritual part of our nature, in which they recognise a resemblance and a relationship to themselves, if they found that we had no love for the participants of that nature, yea, if dissensions in our community gave them to understand that we preferred the flesh to the spirit? And how could they love us for their own sakes either, and because of their hope to see us contributing as "living stones" to the restoration of the holy city, if (which God forbid) they found us devoid of the cement of charity, by which alone we can be united and built into the spiritual walls? How could they entertain the hope that the everlasting walls of the heavenly Jerusalem are to be repaired by means of us if they knew us to be, if they perceived us to be, not "living stones" capable of being united together, but rather "like the dust which the wind driveth from the face of the earth" (Ps. i. 4), which the wind of a single word is enough to send whirling in the air, which the gentlest breath of suspicion is sufficient to scatter? Let so much suffice on the words of the Lord, "He that shall scandalise one of these little ones that believe in Me," etc. For I think what has been said will make you shun this most baneful vice with greater solicitude for the future.

But, my brethren, who can read without surprise the words which follow in our Gospel: "If thy hand or thy foot scandalise thee cut it off and cast if from thee; and if thy eye scandalise thee pluck it out and

cast it from thee" (Matt. xviii. 8, 9)? Are we then admonished to pluck out this bodily eye and to cut off one of our material hands and feet? God forbid that we should entertain so carnal and ridiculous a thought! No, dearest brethren, that is not the Master's meaning; but after warning us against external scandals in the words of great severity which we have been discussing, He now tells us how we are to deal with that scandal which we discover in our own interior where we find an opposing law in our members (Rom. vii. 23). "For He knoweth our frame" (Ps. cii. 14) and that we cannot so easily escape scandal of this kind. Now we are taught by daily experience that interior scandal can arise in three ways. Sometimes it happens that we have in us the "simple eye" (Matt. vi. 22) of a pure intention, which should rather be called the eye of grace than our eye; but we are scandalised by our own eye, the eye that is truly from ourselves, when our self-will strives insistently to substitute another and a less pure intention. For this emergency we have the salutary counsel of the Saviour; "If thy eye scandalise thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee." And we do as recommended when we refuse consent to the suggestion, when we repudiate it, when we manfully resist it. In the same way is to be understood what is said of the hand and the foot. Thus, when we are engaged in good works and our own will endeavours to draw us away to other employments: it is our hand that is now scandalising us, and we must cut it off and cast it from us lest otherwise it should gain our consent.

So too when we burn with the desire to advance in religious perfection and to mount up on the steps

of the mystical ladder which Jacob beheld in vision (Gen. xxviii. 12), and according to what the Psalmist says, to "go from virtue to virtue so that the God of gods shall be seen in Sion" (Ps. lxxxiii. 8) : we are often scandalised by the foot, as it were, of our own pusillanimity and sloth, which struggles rather to backslide or at least to retard our ascent. This also it is necessary to cut off, so that the foot of grace which "standeth in the direct way" (Ps. xxv. 12) may be able to run forward without impinging upon any stumbling-stone, any scandal, any obstruction. With regard to the words, "It is better for thee to go into life maimed or lame than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire ; it is better for thee having one eye to enter into life than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire" (Matt. xviii. 8, 9) : the Lord here addresses Himself to such as follow their own will, no matter whether it is good or bad, and who consequently walk in two ways, pursuing at one time what is good, at another what is evil, according as their desires happen to vary. For these in truth it would be more profitable to follow grace in everything, and whenever self-will stood in the way to cut it off and cast it from them.

But, dearest brethren, after we have been long exercised in thus waging war against our own will, we shall at last succeed in subduing it to such an extent that it shall learn to renounce its arrogance, and then without any more scandal or contradiction "our souls shall be subject to God" (Ps. lxi. 2). Then we shall no longer have any necessity to pluck out our eye, because by cleaving to the simple eye of grace it shall itself have become simple ; or rather they shall not now

be two different eyes at all, but one and the same, according to the testimony of the Apostle, "He who is joined to the Lord is one Spirit with Him" (1 Cor. vi. 17). Understand in the same way what is said about cutting off the hand and the foot. Now he whose will follows the guidance of grace with love and alacrity, so that he desires neither to do anything evil nor anything less perfect nor less perfectly than grace suggests: he undoubtedly is a perfect man. However, such peace belongs to the state of felicity; the time of our probation must be occupied with cutting away the sources of scandal and triumphing over temptation: the former is the lot of the saints in glory, the latter appertains to the trial of virtue.

FIRST SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF ALL SAINTS.

On the Eight Beatitudes.

" And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain, and when He was set down His disciples came unto Him.
" And opening His mouth He taught them, saying :
" Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
" Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land.
" Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.
" Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill.
" Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.
" Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.
" Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God.
" Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
" Blessed are ye when they shall revile and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you untruly for My sake.
" Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven."
—Matt. v. 1-12.

To-day's solemnity, dearest brethren, in honour of all the saints, it behoves us to celebrate with all devotion. For if the feast of a particular saint, as of St. Peter, St. Stephen, or any other, appears great in our eyes and is truly so, how great ought we to esteem the present festivity, not of this saint or of that, but of all taken together? You do not require to be told that it is the custom with worldly people to signalise feast days by preparing more sumptuous meals than usual, and the greater the feast the more costly the good cheer provided. But for those " that are converted to the heart " (Ps. lxxxiv. 9), they surely

ought to long after the delights of the heart, and to spiritual men no delicacies should be offered save such as are spiritual. Wherefore, most dearly beloved, our banquet is now ready, and the viands are prepared; it is time to sit down to table. It is right that our souls should be feasted before our bodies, because they are beyond doubt and beyond comparison the more noble element of our nature: especially since, as is obvious, the solemnities of the saints appertain rather to the soul than to the body, and the things of the soul are more acceptable to the soul by reason of the natural affinity they have to her. It is for this reason also that the saints whom we honour feel greater compassion for our souls than for our bodies, more ardently desire their prosperity, and are more fully delighted with their spiritual refections; because they too were once "passible like unto us" (James v. 17); they, as we, have wept over the sorrows of this earthly pilgrimage and miserable exile; they, as we, have experienced the heavy burden of this body, the tumults of the world, and the temptations of the devil. There can be no doubt, therefore, that they are far more pleased with our manner of celebrating their solemnity with a banquet for the soul than with the way in which it is honoured by worldlings who "make provision for the flesh in its concupiscences" (Rom. xiii. 14).

But, my brethren, how shall we find the bread of the soul in "a desert land, in a place of horror and of vast wilderness" (Deut. xxxii. 10)? How can we hope to receive spiritual nourishment under the sun, where nothing is found but labour and sorrow and "vexation of soul" (Eccles. i. 14)? However, I know

who it is that has promised: "ask and it shall be given you" (Matt. vii. 7), and who has also said, "If, then, you being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the good Spirit to them that ask Him?" (Luke xi. 13). Nor am I ignorant, most dearly beloved, with what fervour you have prayed all this day and all last night, begging of God to give you the living bread from heaven (John vi. 51), not the bread which nourishes the body, but that which "strengtheneth the heart of man" (Ps. ciii. 15). I would not presume to regard the like of us as guests at the heavenly banquet, for we are but beggars living upon the charity of the Lord. We are only beggars, I say, lying before the gate of a most wealthy monarch "full of sores and desiring to be filled—nay, even to be sustained—with the crumbs that fall from the table" (Luke xvi. 20, 21) of our holy patrons whose festival we are keeping to-day. For they abound with spiritual delights; they have received the "good measure and pressed down, and shaken together, and running over" (Luke vi. 38), and I am confident there will be someone who will give unto us (Luke xvi. 21); for assuredly "there is a great chaos" (ibid. 26) and an immeasurable distance between the liberality and loving kindness of our God and the cruelty of the avaricious Dives. Wherefore our good Father—for if He is "the Father of mercies" (2 Cor. i. 3) He must also by consequence be the Father of the miserable—our Father, I say, has given us to-day bread from heaven and "provisions in abundance" (Ps. lxxvii. 25). God grant I may be found a faithful cook and my mind a good kitchen that so the food be not spoiled in the dressing!

I may tell you, dearest brethren, that all last night, whilst I prepared the dishes for your spiritual refection, "my heart was hot within me and in my meditation a fire flamed forth" (Ps. xxxviii. 4); the same fire, no doubt, which the Lord Jesus "cast on the earth" and which He so ardently longed to see enkindled (Luke xii. 49). For in order to cook spiritual food we must have both a spiritual kitchen and a spiritual fire. It only remains then to set before you what I have prepared. And do you attend rather to the Lord Who has provided the food than to me who merely distribute it as His minister. For, considered as to what I am in myself, I am only your fellow-servant, who with you am constantly begging "the bread which cometh down from heaven" and the nourishment of life both for you and for myself, as the Lord can bear me witness (John vi. 50). Therefore it is not I that give unto you, but it is the Father Who "giveth you the true bread from heaven" (John vi. 32): He it is That feedeth you with the works and with the words and even with the Flesh of His only-begotten Son Which is "meat indeed" (ibid. 56). For, as concerns the works I read, "My meat is to do the will of Him That sent Me" (John iv. 34), and with regard to the words, "Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God" (Matt. iv. 4). Consequently, we have now to feed our souls on the Saviour's words and actions; afterwards, by His favour, we shall feast also on His immaculate Flesh in the thrice-holy Sacrament of the Altar.

We read in to-day's Gospel that Jesus, "seeing the multitudes, went up into a mountain." The people, as

you are aware, used to flock forth from the cities and towns to hear the instructions of the Lord Who was constantly occupied in saving their souls and healing their bodies. They clung to Him, fascinated by the extraordinary charm of His words and appearance. For His voice was sweet and His face comely (Cant. ii. 14), and it is to Him the Psalmist says, " Thou art beautiful above the sons of men, grace is poured abroad in Thy lips " (Ps. xliv. 3). Such, my brethren, is He Whom we follow, to Whom we have attached ourselves: " all lovely " (Cant. v. 16); on Whom not alone the people but even the holy angels also " desire to look " (1 Peter i. 12). What sweeter food can I offer you? For that now served is the delight of the angels. " Oh taste," then, " and see that the Lord is sweet " (Ps. xxxiii. 9), so sweet that nothing which the heart can desire is worthy to be compared with His sweetness, with His savour, with His wisdom * which in truth " is drawn out of secret places " (Job xxviii. 18). The same is true of His other perfections. You admire the splendour of the sun, the loveliness of the flower, the agreeable taste of food, the fertility of the earth. But it is God Who has endowed all these creatures with their admirable qualities; and we cannot doubt that He has reserved to Himself a greater degree of excellence in those several ways than He has communicated to the works of His hands.

* In St. Bernard's mind wisdom was closely connected with sweetness and savour. Thus he says in Sermon LXXXV. on the Canticle of Canticles: " And perhaps the word ' sapientia ' (wisdom) is derived from ' sapor ' (savour) because wisdom, as if it were a kind of condiment, lends a sweet savour to the virtue to which it is added, and which itself, without such seasoning, would be dry, so to speak, and insipid. Neither would he seem to me deserving of censure who should define wisdom to be a relish for what is good."—(Translator.

Even the circumstance of His going up into the mountain on this occasion must not be thought lacking in special significance, for it was predicted long ages before by the Prophet Isaias, who said, as if crying aloud to the Saviour from a far distance, "Get Thee up upon a high mountain, Thou That bringest good tidings to Sion; lift up Thy voice with strength, Thou That bringest good tidings to Jerusalem" (Is. xl. 9). In this ascension of the Lord, therefore, it seems to me —unless you, my brethren, can suggest something more plausible—that we must recognise that characteristic of His to which St. Luke calls attention at the beginning of the Acts, saying, "The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, of all the things which Jesus began *to do and to teach*" (Acts i. 1). For Christ did not imitate the Pharisees' custom, who used to "bind heavy and insupportable burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but with a finger of their own they would not move them" (Matt. xxiii. 4). Have we not here also good spiritual bread, excellently well qualified to "strengthen the heart of man"? With all security, my Lord Jesus, "I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou shalt go" (Matt. viii. 19) and confidently will I walk "in the way of Thy commandments" (Ps. cxviii. 32), knowing that Thou hast Thyself traversed it before me. Yes, confidently will "I run the way of Thy commandments" since I know that "from the height of heaven was Thy going out" to run this way, "and Thy circuit even to the height thereof" (Ps. xviii. 7) by the same way. But, my brethren, I cannot masticate for you every item in this way. You must become as "clean animals that chew the cud" (Lev. xi. 2, 3), so that in you may be verified

what is written, "A treasure worthy to be desired rests in the mouth of a wise man" (Prov. xxi. 20, juxta LXX). For both the shortness of the time at our disposal to-day and the abundance of the matter make it necessary to abridge the discourse and to avoid the discussion of details.

Jesus "seeing the multitudes went up into a mountain," seeing them, that is, with a look of compassion, "because they were as wandering sheep, not having a shepherd" (Mark vi. 34). But what means it, brethren, that before He began to teach He ascended the mountain? Does He not by this very action teach us that preachers of the Gospel ought to tend by the desires of the heart and by a holy conversation to the things above, and to scale the heights of virtue? "And when He was set down, His disciples came unto Him." "When He was set down," writes the Evangelist, significantly. For who otherwise could have ever approached such a Giant? But He most kindly stooped and "emptied Himself" (Phil. ii. 7) even to sitting down, so that He could say to the Father, "Thou hast known My sitting down and My rising up" (Ps. cxxxviii. 2). He sat down so that the very publicans and sinners might draw near to Him, so that Magdalen might draw near and the Thief from his cross; for whilst standing up at His full height He was inaccessible even to the angels. "And when He was set down His disciples came unto Him." But they came not so much by the movement of their feet as by the affection of their hearts and by their imitation of His virtues. And observe: not the multitudes, not any of the common people are said to have come near unto Him, but only

His disciples; in order, it would seem, that as the Old Testament (as we read) was delivered on Mount Sinai, Moses alone ascending and all the people waiting below (Exod. xxiv. 14), so now in the same way "the mountains might receive peace for the people and the hills justice" (Ps. lxxi. 3), and that what was told the apostles in the dark they might speak in the light and might proclaim upon the house-tops what they heard in the ear (Matt. x. 27). Hence the Evangelist goes on, "And opening His mouth He taught them."

"And opening His mouth He taught them." Yes, He now opened His own mouth Who had been accustomed hitherto to open the mouths of the prophets. Hence these words of the Royal Singer, which are found in the psalms, "O Lord, Thou wilt open my lips, and my mouth shall declare Thy praise" (Ps. l. 17). But now He "Who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all hath spoken to us" (Heb. i. 2) with His own mouth, as if He said, "I Myself That spoke behold I am here" (Is. lii. 6). Oh, blessed they that listened to Wisdom speaking in the flesh! Blessed they that heard the words which fell from the mouth of the Word of God! But, my brethren, what they were privileged to hear is still preserved for us; we also can hear the Saviour's words although not, as the disciples, from His human lips.

"And opening His mouth, He taught them, saying: Blessed are the poor of spirit." Truly was His mouth open then, the mouth of Him "in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. ii. 3). And truly is this the doctrine of Him Who says in the Apocalypse, "Behold, I make all things new"

(Apoc. xxi. 5), Who had announced long before by His Prophet: "I will open My mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world" (Ps. lxxvii. 2; Matt. xiii. 35). For what can be more hidden than the blessedness of poverty? Nevertheless it is Truth That speaks, and Truth can neither deceive nor be deceived; it is Truth That proclaims, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." O ye senseless sons of Adam, do you thus eagerly run after riches and yearn for wealth even to this hour, whereas the blessedness of the poor man's lot has been plainly announced by God Himself, "hath been preached unto men, is believed in the world" (1 Tim. iii. 16)? Let the pagan who lives "without God in this world" (Ephes. ii. 12) strive for the treasures of earth, and likewise the Jew, who received the promise of a temporal reward: but with what manner of countenance, or rather with what kind of conscience can a Christian pursue temporal riches after he has heard Christ declaring, "Blessed are the poor"? How long, O ye "alien children" (Ps. xvii. 46), how long shall your "mouth speak vanity" (Ps. cxliii. 11) so as to "call happy the people who possess these things" (ibid. 15), these visible and transient treasures; whereas the Son of God, opening His mouth, has beatified poverty and pronounced woes upon wealth (Luke vi. 24)?

But note carefully that the Lord speaks of the "poor in spirit," not of the ordinary poor, whose poverty is due rather to miserable necessity than to praiseworthy choice. With respect to these latter, I hope indeed that the misery of their unhappy lot will avail to win them mercy from the Divine Goodness; neverthe-

less I know that it is not of them the Lord is speaking in this place, but only of such as can say with the Psalmist, "I will voluntarily sacrifice to Thee" (Ps. liii. 8). Yet not even all voluntary poverty "hath glory before God" (Rom. iv. 2). For we read of certain philosophers who renounced all things in order that they might be able to devote themselves more freely to the study of vanity, thus emancipated from worldly cares; they were unwilling to abound in the goods of fortune that they might rather "abound in their own sense"* (Rom. xiv. 5). These also are separated from the beatified poor, who are called "poor in spirit," that is, poor, not alone voluntarily, but with a *spiritual* will. Therefore the words, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," were spoken of such only as are poor from a spiritual intention, from a spiritual desire, from a pure motive of pleasing God and saving their own souls: "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." But who is this that thus speaks? Who is this that thus beatifies and as it were enriches poverty? What think you, brethren? Is it possible that these words should turn out true? Yes, infallibly they shall so turn out, for neither truthfulness nor power can be wanting in Him Who has made the promise. And should the enemy murmur he shall hear this in reply: "Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will? Is thy eye evil because I am good?" (Matt. xx. 15). "If thou hast been justly humbled because of thy desire to exalt thyself against Me, do not they that have voluntarily humbled themselves for My glory deserve to be exalted?" (Luke xiv. 11). And in truth, brethren,

* That is, in their own self-conceit. St. Paul, however, uses the word (τῷ ἰδίῳ νοὶ—in suo sensu) in a good sense.—(Translator.)

if that most miserable apostate has been hurled down from the height of heaven because he ambitioned undue loftiness, because he coveted exaltation, because he pretended to majesty; does it not follow that they are blessed who have voluntarily humbled themselves in the lowliness of poverty, and that, according to the Lord's promise, "theirs is the kingdom of heaven" which he so miserably lost? And consider how wisely Wisdom has ordered all things, opposing the first remedy to the first fault. It is as if He said to us plainly, "Do you desire to obtain the kingdom which the proud angels lost because they trusted in their own strength and in the multitude of their riches (Ps. xlviii. 7)? Embrace the lowliness of poverty and it is yours."

We have next: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the earth (terram)." Good! Admirable! For so it was befitting that, after speaking in praise of poverty, the Lord should likewise commend the virtue of meekness. This order, I say, was necessary, because usually the first temptation that attacks such as have renounced all things for Christ's sake is due to bodily discomforts and the unwonted afflictions of the flesh. Now what would be the advantage of poverty if (which God forbid!) he who has made himself poor gives way to murmuring, becomes peevish and impatient of discipline? Rightly, too, after the promise of the kingdom of heaven is a lesser kingdom given as an earnest, so to speak, of the greater; so that in the words of the Apostle, we might "have the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. iv. 8), and that the bestowal of

present benefits might confirm our hope of future favours.

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the earth." It seems to me, my brethren, that by the earth spoken of here we are to understand the earth of our own body, which if the soul desires to possess, if she would reign over her members, she must practise the virtue of meekness and become perfectly subject to her own superiors; because whatsoever degree of submission she offers to them that are over her, the same shall she get from that which is under her. Hence we are told that the creature is armed to avenge the injury done to the Creator (Wisdom v. 18). And therefore, whenever the soul finds the flesh rebellious to her will, let her take this as proof that she herself likewise is wanting in due submission "to the higher powers" (Rom. xiii. 1). Let her learn to be meek, and to humble herself "under the mighty hand of God" (1 Peter v. 6); let her be subject to the Most High and also to the human superiors who hold His place in her regard: then shall she find her body obedient and submissive. For He is Truth Itself Who has said, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the earth." And see if we have not offered us here the second remedy for the wound of the second sin. The first to sin after the ruin of the angelic revolt was Mother Eve, agitated by disquietude of spirit and unwilling to endure any longer the sweet and light yoke (Matt. xi. 29) of the Lord's prohibition. For she would not wait to merit from the hand of God, Who had already given her all other gifts, the last one also, namely, the perfection of happiness, but at the serpent's instigation attempted to snatch it before the time.

In punishment for this offence she was driven out of paradise and moreover "found a law in her members fighting against the law of her mind" (Rom. vii. 23).

Perhaps, my dear brother, this promise of the Lord has now inflamed thy heart with an ardent desire of meekness: but thou complainest of the austerity of thy disposition, of thy fits of fury unworthy of a rational creature, and of thy ungovernable temper. Well then, listen to what follows. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." As wild horses are tamed with the whip so may passionate tempers be sweetened by compunction of heart and the frequent flow of contrite tears. Therefore "in all thy works remember thy last end" (Ecclus. vii. 40); never allow the horror of death and the awful ordeal of the judgment and the terrors of the fiery abyss to be far removed from the eyes of thy heart; reflect on the misery of thy banishment; "recount all thy years in the bitterness of thy soul" (Is. xxxviii. 15); think of the manifold dangers to which human life is exposed; meditate on thine own fragility: and I promise thee that if thou perseverest in such reflections, whatsoever trouble thou mayest experience outwardly it shall appear very trifling as compared with the interior solicitude which shall then occupy thy whole heart. But neither will the Lord suffer thee to be deprived of every consolation, because He is "the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort" (2 Cor. i. 3): He will assuredly fulfil that which Truth has promised in the words, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." This is quite in accord with what we read in Ecclesiastes, "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting"

(Eccles. vii. 3). Wherefore, happy wouldst thou have been, O Mother Eve, if after thy sin thou soughtest at once the consolation of tears, and being converted to penance didst thus more speedily obtain pardon. But thou didst prefer to find a most miserable comfort in the like fault of thy husband, and with the foul venom of a most hateful vice didst poison all thy posterity: for even still, to this day, after thine example, one poor mortal finds his consolation in the ruin of another. O miserable consolation of Eve! Miserable consolation of those that imitate her! But "blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." Now what else is this promised comfort but the grace of devotion springing from the hope of pardon, the sweet delight found in well-doing, and the relish of true wisdom (even though experienced but in a slight degree) wherewith the loving-kind Lord sometimes refreshes the soul during her earthly pilgrimage? Yet such foretaste is intended for no other purpose than to increase our desire of heaven and intensify our love of God, as it is written, "They that eat Me shall yet hunger and they that drink Me shall yet thirst" (Ecclus. xxiv. 29).

Therefore we find added immediately, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill." He that hungers let him hunger still more, and he that desires let his desire grow greater: because howsoever much we may desire just so much shall we receive. But what am I saying? It is not according to the imperfection and narrow limits of our desires that we shall receive (since there cannot be perfect desire before perfect possession nor perfect possession before perfect desire) but we shall receive

"good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over" (Luke vi. 38). "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill." Whilst the palate of the heart is still perverted and the soul in a languishing state, justice appears to be something dry and insipid: but such as have tasted it, "behold they know" (John xviii. 21) how blessed they are that hunger after justice, "for they shall have their fill." Oh, truly blessed and glorious fulness! Oh, holy feast! Oh, banquet most desirable, whereat there can never be any anxiety, never any disrelish, because the fulness there shall be always perfect and the appetite always keen!

"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill." It seems to me, brethren, that these words imply reproof of Adam who appears indeed to have possessed some part of justice, inasmuch as he compassionated his wife; but if he really hungered after justice he certainly would not have neglected to pay what he owed not only to his wife but to his Creator as well. To his wife, doubtless, he owed compassion and correction, as to an inferior, "because the husband is the head of the wife" (Ephes. v. 23). But to God he was bound to render obedience and submission. Now what are we to think of this? There are very many even to this present time who condemn with much severity the conduct of Adam and nevertheless follow his evil example. They conceive indignation against our first father, because he hearkened to the voice of Eve rather than to the voice of God. And yet they themselves are constantly doing the same thing, rendering to their own Eve, that is, to their flesh, the obedience they

owe to God. Tell me, brethren: suppose you had been present and saw Adam placed in that dilemma, when "thoughts were arising in his heart" (Luke xxiv. 38) and he felt "straitened between two" (Phil. i. 23), between the solicitation of his wife and the command of his Maker: would you not have called out to him and said, "Mind thyself, O miserable man; take care not to yield; the woman has been seduced, do not hearken to her entreaty?" But wherefore then do you not address the like admonition to yourselves when the like "temptation taketh hold of you" (1 Cor. x. 13), since "blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice"? Yet what is all our justice in the sight of God? Is it not reputed as a filthy rag, to use the Prophet's comparison (Is. lxiv. 6)? And if closely scrutinised shall not all our righteousness be found unrighteous and full of faults? Wherefore, let us cry earnestly to the Lord with the Psalmist, saying, O Lord, "enter not into judgment with Thy servant" (Ps. xcii. 2), let us have recourse with all humility to the divine mercy "which alone is able to save our souls" (James i. 21), and let us carefully examine what follows:

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Remark, my brethren, how Zaccheus embraced both this and the preceding beatitude in a few words when he said, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have wronged any man of any thing I restore him fourfold" (Luke xix. 8). You see how much this man hungered after justice, since he was not satisfied with paying what was strictly due, but would render fourfold. His mercy also is shown to be great by his giving half of

his goods to the poor. But, dearest brethren, I will not dissemble my thoughts, "My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord" (Ps. cxliv. 21), yes, not your praise, but "the praise of the Lord." For it is not to you but to the name of the Lord I give the glory of what I am about to say (Ps. cxiii. 9). That first Zaccheus "whose praise is in the Gospel" (2 Cor. viii. 18) certainly performed a generous act in giving half of his goods to the poor: but I behold here many Zaccheuses who have given up not half but the whole of their goods, keeping nothing at all for themselves. What evangelist shall write the gospel of these Zaccheuses of mine, nay, rather of these Peters of mine, who can say boldly to the Lord, "Behold, we have left all things and have followed Thee?" (Matt. xix. 27). But it is written already in "the eternal Gospel" (Apoc. xiv. 6), it is written and sealed in the Book of Life.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." These words, my brethren, condemn the cruelty of Adam; for cruel he really was, although it seemed to us just now that he sinned through excessive love of his wife. But let us see. Behold, O Adam, we are aware that she is bone of thy bones and flesh of thy flesh (Gen. ii. 23), and that thy sin has been in consequence of thy great love for her. But prove to us now how exceeding great that love is. The Lord cometh with a "flaming sword" (Gen. iii. 24) in His hand to avenge the woman's transgression. Do thou in order to shield her expose thyself to danger, saying, "Lord, the woman is weak, she has been seduced; mine only is the iniquity, mine all the sin, therefore on me alone let Thy vengeance fall." Not thus, how-

ever, did he give proof of his affection. Far from it. "The woman whom Thou gavest me to be my companion," he said, "gave me of the tree and I did eat" (Gen. iii. 12). Oh, what perversity! Thou refuseth to suffer the penalty for her sake for whom thou hast not refused to commit the sin! Alas, how everything has been thrown into confusion! Thou wast criminally compassionate when thou oughtest to have been kindly cruel, and art now criminally cruel when thou shouldst be kindly compassionate. For as it was thy duty on no account to have sinned for her, so oughtest thou now to be willing to suffer for her. This, my brethren, is the rule we should all observe: never to sin for the sake of any man whatsoever—which is the part of justice, but to be willing to make satisfaction for the sins of others—which belongs to mercy. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice for they shall have their fill," and "blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy."

We are told next: "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." Yea, blessed indeed and supremely blessed are they that shall see Him "on Whom the angels desire to look" (1 Peter i. 12), Him Whom to see is eternal life (John xvii. 3). "My heart hath said to Thee," sings the Psalmist: "my face hath sought Thee: Thy face. O Lord, will I still seek" (Ps. xxvi. 8). "For what have I in heaven? and besides Thee, what do I desire upon earth? For Thee my flesh and my heart hath pined away: Thou art the God of my heart and the God That is my portion for ever" (Ps. lxxii. 25, 26). Oh, when wilt Thou "fill me with joy with Thy countenance" (Ps. xv. 11)? Woe to me because of the uncleanness of

my heart, by reason whereof I am not yet deemed worthy to be admitted to that blessed vision! With how much earnestness, most dearly beloved, with how much ardour ought we not to apply ourselves to the task of cleansing that internal eye wherewith God is to be seen! And for my own part, I perceive myself to be befouled with a threefold defilement: concupiscence of the flesh, concupiscence of temporal glory (1 John ii. 16) and the consciousness of my past sins. For I feel in my mind certain motions of both these concupiscences which I am powerless to suppress either by force of reason or by any other means, so long as I live in "this present wicked world" (Gal. i. 4) and am held captive in "the body of this death" (Rom. vii. 24). Against these defilements, however, we must use the remedy of prayer, and therefore "as the eyes of the handmaid are upon the hands of her mistress, so are our eyes unto the Lord our God, until He have mercy on us" (Ps. cxxii. 2), He Who alone "can make him clean that is conceived of unclean seed" (Job xiv. 4). With regard to the consciousness of sin, it is for this that the remedy of confession has been instituted, and all things, as you know, are made clean in confession.

Such, my brethren, are the purgatives which cleanse the eye of the heart: prayer and confession. And you have heard the Lord saying, "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." They shall see Him "face to face" only in the life to come, but they shall see Him in the present life also, although it shall be "through a glass in a dark manner" (1 Cor. xiii. 12): they "now know in part but then they shall know even as they are known" (ibid.). Every man

conscious of sin which yet he refuses to renounce, either sins in hope, and regards God as one whom sin does not greatly displease, or sins in despair, judging God to be devoid of mercy. But to both types of sinner He says, "Thou thoughtest unjustly that I shall be like to thee" (Ps. xlix. 21). And rightly, for neither of them can see the true God, "and iniquity hath lied to itself" (Ps. xxvi. 12), fashioning for itself what is but a vain idol because it is not He. But "blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God," yea, and they alone, who alone "think of the Lord in goodness" (Wisdom i. 1), which is to think of Him as He is in truth, for He truly is good, and so good that, as compared with Him, none else is good at all (Luke xviii. 19). "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God": miserable, therefore, Adam and Eve, who, "inclining their hearts to evil words to make excuses in sins" (Ps. xl. 4), refuse the purgative of confession, and consequently remaining with hearts uncleansed deserve to be driven forth from the sight of God.

"Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God." Rightly, my brethren, are they called the children of God who co-operate in the work of the only-begotten Son of God. For He it is through Whom we are reconciled and "have peace with God" (Rom. v. 1); He it is Who hath "made peace through the Blood of His cross both as to the things on earth and the things that are in heaven" (Col. i. 20), the "one Mediator of God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. ii. 5). Observe here how in the first three beatitudes a man is reconciled to himself, in the two following he is reconciled to

his neighbour, in the sixth to God, whilst in the seventh he even becomes the reconciler of others, as one admitted to the favour of his Lord and enjoying with Him a happy familiarity. The first three beatitudes, I say, reconcile man to himself, for by poverty, meekness and mourning there is renewed in his soul a certain likeness and image of the Divine Eternity which embraces in itself all the divisions of time; inasmuch as by poverty he merits the future, by meekness he is made master of the present, and by the tears of penance he recovers the past, according to what is written, "I will recount to Thee all my years in the bitterness of my soul." Furthermore, justice and mercy cause us to live in perfect harmony with our neighbour, since justice ordains that we should not do to others whatsoever we are unwilling should be done to us by others, and mercy prescribes that whatsoever we would that men should do to us, we also, should do to them (Matt. vii. 12). Being thus reconciled to ourselves and reconciled to our neighbour, we may now confidently hope for reconciliation with God also, through cleanliness of heart. And blessed is he who, not unthankful for his own restoration to the divine favour, but piously solicitous for his brethren, strives by every means in his power that they too may be reconciled with their Lord (Gen. xl.). For of what commendations is he not worthy, and with what affection does he not deserve to be embraced, who "conversing without blame" (Phil. iii. 6) amongst his brethren watches over himself with all solicitude lest he should be in any way a cause of annoyance to others, and endures with the utmost patience whatever he finds troublesome in them; who considers as his own the

scandals of everyone, so that he can say with the Apostle, "Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is scandalised and I am not on fire?" (2 Cor. xi. 29). "Blessed are the peace-makers for they shall be called the children of God": "for God is not the God of dissension but of peace" (1 Cor. xiv. 33), and therefore it is fitting that the sons of peace should also be called the sons of God.

We come now to the eighth beatitude, which is the privilege of the holy martyrs, and to merit which we have neither the strength nor the opportunity. For nowadays justice is held in honour, so far, at least, as outward appearances go, and none or only very few have to suffer persecution for its sake. But blessed are they—if there be any—"for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," whither no persecution can follow them. And if their tribulation be manifold, manifold in proportion ought to be their joy, for they should attend more to the rewards which are invisible than to the sufferings which are seen. "For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. iv. 18). "Blessed are ye," said the Lord, "when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you untruly for My sake. Be glad and rejoice in that day for your reward is very great in heaven" (Matt. v. 11, 12), yea, far greater than the labours you have to endure on earth.

But what means it, most dearly beloved, that the same reward is promised to the poor and to the martyrs? Are we not hereby instructed to look upon voluntary poverty as in very truth a kind of martyrdom "Blessed is the man," says the Prophet, "that hath

not gone after gold, nor put his trust in money nor in treasures. Who is he and we will praise him? For he hath done wonderful things in his life" (Ecclus. xxxi. 8, 9). What indeed can you find more wonderful, what martyrdom can be more cruel than to be famished with hunger in the midst of the banquets, to shiver with cold, half-clad, in the midst of the abundance of costly garments, to be oppressed with poverty in the midst of the wealth which the world offers, which the devil displays, which our own cupidity longs for? And does not he deserve to be crowned whoever shall have so contended (2 Tim. ii. 5), rejecting the world's promises, despising the devil's temptations and—what is still more glorious—vanquishing himself and crucifying his itching concupiscence? In fine, the kingdom of heaven is promised alike to poverty and to martyrdom, but whilst it is truly purchased by poverty, it is actually given and given at once to those who suffer for Christ's sake.

SECOND SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF ALL SAINTS.

On the State of the Saints before the General Resurrection.

"In peace in the self-same I will sleep and I will rest, for Thou, Lord, hast singularly settled me in hope."—Ps. iv. 9, 10.

As * to-day, most dearly beloved, we are celebrating a feast full of gladness, and worthy of all our devotion, in honour of all the saints, I think it will be well if, with the help of the Holy Spirit, I discourse to you for a while on the happy repose which they already enjoy in common and on the blissful consummation to which they look forward. In treating this subject I shall follow, not the conjectures of my own mind, but the authority of the inspired authors: I shall keep as close as I can to Scriptural testimony lest I should seem to prophesy out of my own heart. The fruit I expect from this sermon—through the favour of God—is threefold: I expect that from an understanding, even partial, of the saints' happy recompense, we shall feel animated to follow their footprints more faithfully for the future, to long for their companionship with more fervent desires, and to commend ourselves to their protection with more eager devotion. For it is "a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation" (1 Tim. i. 15) that we ought to imitate the example of those whom we worship with solemn

* With regard to what is said in this and the following discourse concerning the present condition of the souls of the saints, the reader is referred to the note on page 323, vol. i. of this series.—(Translator.)

veneration, that we should hasten with all eagerness to participate in the bliss of those whom we pronounce most blessed, and that we should be supported by the patronage of those whose praises we delight to celebrate. And in truth we find the practice of keeping festivals in honour of the saints very useful as a remedy against languor, tepidity, and sloth; for our weakness is reinforced by their powerful intercession, our apathy is enlivened by the consideration of their reward, whilst their example serves to instruct our ignorance. Wherefore since (as I cannot doubt) you have been already perfectly enlightened as to how you should walk in the footsteps of the saints by this day's Gospel lesson, containing as it does the Lord's sermon on the Mount (wherein He has erected before your eyes the mystical ladder on which the whole company of the blessed whom we honour to-day have mounted to glory); and since I am not ignorant that almost the whole of your time last night and this morning has been devoutly consecrated to imploring their intercession, it seems to me that I ought to endeavour to say something to you now, little though it be, concerning their happiness, according as He shall inspire me Who is now magnifying and glorifying those whom He first called and justified (Rom. viii. 30).

We read in one of the psalms, "Turn, O my soul, into thy rest, for the Lord hath been bountiful to thee. For He hath delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from falling" (Ps. cxiv. 7, 8). And in another psalm it is said, "Our soul hath been delivered as a sparrow out of the snare of the fowlers" (Ps. cxxiii. 7). It would not be difficult, as I think, to find in the Holy Books many similar

expressions from the lips of men marvelling much and rejoicing over their deliverance, expressions of perfect security and of boundless bliss, "thanksgiving and the voice of praise" (Is. li. 3), which, according to my judgment, are altogether inapplicable to such as still "dwell in houses of clay" (Job iv. 19) and eat their bread in the sweat of their brow (Gen. iii. 19). For which of them could boast of a perfectly pure heart? Who amongst mortals would have the presumption to say that "the snare is broken" (Ps. cxxiii. 7) for him and his feet secured against falling, in opposition to the Apostle who cries out to us, "He that thinketh himself to stand let him take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. x. 12)? It was this insecurity that caused the same Apostle to write of himself, "Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. vii. 24). And in another place he thus expresses himself, "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended. But one thing I do: forgetting the things that are behind and stretching forth myself to those that are before, I press towards the mark" (Phil. iii. 13,14). Again he says, "I so run, not as at an uncertainty; I so fight, not as one beating the air: but I chastise my body and bring it into subjection, lest perhaps when I have preached to others I myself should become a castaway" (1 Cor. ix. 26,27). In this assuredly you hear the blast of the war-trumpet; these words are the battle-cry of a strenuous leader gallantly fighting the foe. As to the previous testimonies quoted from the Psalmist and other like expressions, they seem to be less appropriate to an actual combatant than to one celebrating a triumph, or rather to one returning victorious from

the battle with a triumph in store, and looking forward with a secure and joyous conscience to the day appointed for that crowning honour.

For what says the valorous soldier, the faithful servant, on coming home from the war? Does he not say with the Psalmist, "Turn, O my soul, into thy rest?" So long as he had to fight the battles of the Lord in "the body of this death" there was no rest for him, both on account of the labour of the conflict and because of the feeling of insecurity whilst the issue was as yet undecided. On the one side the tumult of temptations refused him any respite; on the other, the fear of succumbing kept him in a state of anxious solicitude. Nevertheless, even then the soldier of Christ was not without glory, although he could not have rest. Listen to that zealous and most fearless warrior of whom I made mention a moment ago: "Our glory," says he, "is this: the testimony of our conscience" (2 Cor. i. 12). Now the testimony of conscience spoken of here must not—at least according to my opinion—be so understood as if the Apostle's conscience gave testimony in his own favour: "for not he who commendeth himself is approved, but he whom God commendeth" (2 Cor. x. 18). No, dearest brethren, the testimony of conscience in which St. Paul glories is not that which the conscience itself gives but that which in it the Spirit of truth "giveth to our spirit, that we are the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 16). In short, it is the testimony which conscience receives, not that which it renders. For when a man hears the applause of truth within himself and the approval of justice, he may assuredly regard it as the voice of God commending him, and of the Holy

Spirit testifying in his behalf: just as if a soldier, making a manful fight, beheld his sovereign (for the love and honour of whom he is combating) standing near, smiling approval on his efforts, praising his deeds of prowess, encouraging him with the assurance that the victory is at hand and the reward already prepared, and holding out to his hope the promise of a crown of unfading glory. Such testimony gives glory to the tried and intrepid soldier; but he does not rest in it, rather he fights with all the more heart and courage on account of it. And even whilst the war rages, the elect of God rejoice, yet only in "the first fruits of the Spirit" (Rom. viii. 23), Who also with His own divine strength "helpeth their infirmity" (ibid. 26) as with His testimony He consoles their pusillanimity. Hence the same Apostle of whom I have been speaking declares: "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but justice and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xiv. 17).

But now that the time of war is over for them, in their own spirits also the saints have joy, whilst they await the day on which they shall be found worthy to enter into the joy of their Lord (Matt. xxv. 21) and to have joy thenceforth even in their bodies. This in truth seems to be the signification of what is said in the Psalm, "The light of Thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us: Thou hast given gladness in my heart" (Ps. iv. 7). But by what means? The verse following explains: "By the fruit of their corn, their wine, and oil" (ibid. 8). For, as we may suppose, the soul represented here as speaking has heard the voice which said, "Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates" (Prov.

xxxi. 31). Here also you have the reason why John was commanded to write in his Apocalypse, " Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord " (Apoc. xiv. 13). Wherefore blessed? " From henceforth now, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours " (ibid.). Hence too, in that very psalm from which I have been quoting, following the words last cited, you may read, " In peace in the self-same I will sleep and I will rest " (Ps. iv. 9). And with regard to works, the Evangelist, adds, " for their works follow them" (Apoc. ibid.). Now to what purpose do their works follow the just if it be not to " praise them in the gates ? " To what purpose except that the elect souls may be " multiplied from the fruit of their corn, their wine, and oil," and that, receiving " of the fruit of their hands," the mystical calves (destined, as we learn from the Psalmist, to be laid upon the altar of the Lord when the walls of Jerusalem have been rebuilt) may be made fat (Ps. l. 20,21) ? In the meantime they are placed not upon, but under the altar, according to the teaching of one whose " testimony is exceedingly credible " (Ps. xcii. 5) and who affirms in his Apocalypse that he has himself heard their voices under the altar (Apoc. vi. 9,10). Therefore the light of the Lord's countenance is still only signed upon them ; they possess in their hearts great joy indeed, yet not full joy, until the dawn of that day when God " shall fill them with joy with His countenace " (Ps. xv. 11). In the meantime, I say, these holy souls " turn into their own rest," awaiting the hour when they shall be counted worthy to enter into the rest of the Lord. Their works now " praise them in the gates," and so shall it be until the time comes when " every man shall have

praise from God " (1 Cor. iv. 5). You see, my brethren, how admirably in accord are the various scriptural testimonies, and how the different authors speak in the same sense and almost in the same words of the happiness enjoyed by the souls of the just.

Dearest brethren, we must beware of undervaluing the rest or doubting the beatitude of them that recount their years in the gladness of their souls (Is. xxxviii. 45), being delivered at last and for ever from all that could trouble their peace. For they truly rejoice for the days in which they have heen humbled, for the years in which they have seen evils (Ps. lxxxix. 15). With joyous wonderment and wondering joy they recall the dangers they escaped, the toils they endured, and the enemies they vanquished ; and on all these counts, with the most assured confidence, they " look for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and their Saviour Jesus Christ " (Tit. ii. 13), " Who will reform the body of their lowness, made like to the Body of His glory" (Phil. iii. 21).

Oh, how great is the happiness, how unutterable the joy of those blessed ones who are filled with a threefold delight and exultation from the memory of virtues exercised in the past, from the fruition of peace in the present, from the assured hope of consummation in the future ! With regard to the future consummation, it is their voice we hear, and speaking concerning this, at the end of that same Psalm from which I quoted a while ago : they say, each of the holy souls to whom it has been given to arrive at this rest, " In peace in the self-same I will sleep and I will rest, for Thou, O Lord, hast settled me

singularly in hope" (Ps. iv. 9,10). Notice how it is said, "Thou hast settled me *singularly* in hope," for such happy souls no longer fluctuate between hope and fear, as they did formerly during the period of probation, not without much anxiety and solicitude. Concerning the present repose of the saints, we find the following in another Psalm: "Turn, O my soul, into thy rest, for the Lord hath been bountiful to thee." Yes, bountiful indeed, but not yet supremely bountiful. Hear further in what manner the Lord has shown His bounty: "For He hath delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from falling." that is to say, He hath delivered me entirely from all sin, from the penalty of sin, and from the fear and the peril of relapsing into sin. This state of security, my brethren, is a most pleasant couch for the soul, a couch which she has no occasion to wash or water with her tears (Ps. vi. 7), since God hath now wiped away all tears from her eyes (Apoc. xxi. 4). It is a bed in which there is no necessity for compunction (Ps. iv. 5), neither does she turn in it in her anguish "whilst the thorn is fastened" (Ps. xxxi. 4). For she has now gone forth from the land which produces thorns and thistles (Gen. iii. 18). Yes, this is undoubtedly a soft bed for the soul, and it requires not to be "turned in her sickness" (Ps. xl. 4), because all sickness and infirmities have passed away from her for ever. This, I say, is a most delightful and most salutary couch for the soul: a clean, tranquil, and secure conscience. Let the purity of her conscience, then, be to the blessed soul as a mattress, let tranquillity of mind serve her for a pillow, and let security be her covering: and in this luxurious couch let her slumber sweetly and bliss-

fully repose until the day appointed for her final consummation.

Now as regards the memory of virtues exercised in the past, we have what are clearly the very words of the holy souls in the hundredth and twenty-third psalm, in addition to the similar testimonies already cited. They consider and recall with no little wonder from what snares and from what perils they have merited to be delivered by the divine help, and exulting in the Lord they exclaim: "If it had not been that the Lord was with us, let Israel now say, if it had not been that the Lord was with us when men rose up against us, perhaps they had swallowed us up alive; when their fury was enkindled against us, perhaps the water had swallowed us up. Our soul hath passed through a torrent, perhaps our soul had passed through a water insupportable" (Ps. xxiii. 1–5). And they add, "Blessed be the Lord Who hath not given us a prey to their teeth" (ibid.). The words of the Apostle also, uttered when the time of his dissolution was close at hand (2 Tim. iv. 6), seem to have been pronounced in anticipation of the state in which he now blissfully reposes, and therefore are much more applicable to him now than when he spoke them. For with fullest confidence he declared, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me in that day" (ibid. 7–8).

Such, dearest brethren, such, I assure you, are the present employments of the saints, such is their food and such their repose. And the reason why the Holy Spirit willed to have recorded the words I have cited,

with all others of similar import, I assume to be this: that from them we might be able to learn something concerning the happiness already enjoyed by the blessed.

But these meditations on the present, past, and future affect them far more powerfully and fill them with far greater delight than it is possible for either our minds to conceive or our tongues to express. For hear how the Prophet labours in the effort to give us a true idea of their blessedness, multiplying his words and yet failing to do justice to what he wishes to describe: "Oh, how great is the multitude of Thy sweetness, O Lord," he exclaims, "which Thou hast hidden for them that fear Thee" (Ps. xxx. 20). Yet listen to what he adds: "Thou hast perfected it for them that hope in Thee, in the sight of the sons of men" (ibid. 10). Consequently, the "multitude of sweetness" which is "hidden" is great indeed and very great, but still short of perfect: for we are told it will be made perfect, not in secret, but openly, "in the sight of the sons of men," when the saints shall no longer repose under the altar, but as judges shall sit upon everlasting thrones. For the souls of the saints are admitted to rest as soon as they leave their bodies, but not to the full glory of the kingdom. "The just wait for me," sang the Psalmist whilst still detained in the prison of this body, "until Thou reward me" (Ps. cxli. 8); and in the same sense the divine voice answered the holy souls who were soliciting the resurrection of their bodies, telling them "that they should rest for a little time, till their fellow-servants and their brethren, who are to be slain even as they, should be filled up" (Apoc. vi. 11).

But I must now bring the sermon to a close, as it is time to proceed to the celebration of Mass. What remains to be said on the subject I have been discussing must be reserved for a future discourse.

THIRD SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF ALL SAINTS

How the Souls of the Saints are free from spot but not as yet without wrinkle.

"That He might present to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing"— Ephes. v. 27.

You have observed, as I think, dearest brethren, from what has been said in the preceding discourse, that there are three states of existence for the souls of the saints: the first in this corruptible body, the second apart from the body, and the third in the glorified body; the first in warfare, the second in peace, the third in perfect beatitude; the first in the tabernacles, the second in the courts, the third in the house of the Lord. "How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!" exclaims the Psalmist (Ps. lxxxiii. 1). But far more desirable are His courts; hence it is added, "My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord" (ibid.). And since, as you have heard, even in the courts there is something wanting to the happiness of the saints, the Prophet again cries out: "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord" (ibid. 5). Most dearly beloved, greatly in truth have "I rejoiced at the things that were said to me: we shall go into the house of the Lord" (Ps. cxxi. 1). And if you desire to know how I can feel so confident, it is because of the multitude of our race who already stand within the courts, awaiting the day when their bodies shall be restored to them and the number of their brethren shall be filled up. For

into that most blissful house they shall not enter except in company with us and with their own bodies, that is, neither the saints without the ordinary faithful nor the spirit without the flesh. It would appear incongruous if man were endowed with complete happiness whilst his nature remained as yet incomplete, or the Church, whilst still imperfect, with the perfection of glory. Wherefore, when they, viz., the souls of the saints, solicited the resurrection of their bodies, as I mentioned in my last discourse, they received the answer from God " that they should rest for a little time till their fellow-servants and their brethren should be filled up " (Apoc. vi. 11). They have been given, however, each of them a single robe (ibid.), but they shall not be " clothed with double garments " (Prov. xxxi. 21) until we also are clothed: according to what the Apostle says, speaking of the patriarchs and prophets, " All these, being approved by the testimony of faith, received not the promise, God providing some better thing for us that they should not be perfected without us " (Heb. xi. 40). By the first robe we are to understand the beatitude and repose which the blessed already enjoy and of which I have spoken already; the second robe signifies the glory and immortality reserved for their bodies. Hence their prayer to God: " Revenge, O Lord, the blood of Thy servants which hath been shed " (Ps. lxxviii. 10, Apoc. vi. 10): is not inspired by vindictive feeling or by a longing for vengeance on their persecutors, but only by the desire for the resurrection and glorification of their bodies which, as they know, shall not be until the day of judgment.

But whence is this to thee, O miserable flesh? O

foul and fetid flesh, whence is this to thee? Not surely from thine own merits, but from the fact that the holy souls, which God has impressed and adorned with His own image, desire thy company, that the souls redeemed with His precious Blood await thee, that without thee neither their joy can be full nor their glory perfect nor their happiness complete; and so strong is this natural desire in them that their affection cannot wholly and freely tend to God, but suffers a kind of contortion and makes a "wrinkle" (Ephes. v. 27) so long as they are distracted by the longing for thee. Hence the blessed Apostle John, who has revealed so much by the Spirit concerning that state in which the souls of the saints are blissfully reposing, tells us that "they are without spot before the throne of God" (Apoc. xiv. 5). "Without spot," yes, but not without "wrinkle," until the time comes when Christ shall "present them to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing" (Ephes. v. 27). In those of her members who have still to wage war the Church is not even free from stain: for "no one is without stain, not even the infant that has lived a single day on the earth," where, as the same holy Job bears witness, "the life of man is a warfare" (Job vii. 1). She is without stain in those who are now resting under the altar of the Lord (Apoc. vi. 9), according to what is said in the psalm, "Lord, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle? or who shall rest in Thy holy hill? He that walketh without blemish" (Ps. xiv. 1). Therefore he alone "who walketh without blemish" shall rest on the mountain of the Lord. But whosoever shall be found free from both wrinkle and stain shall be exalted above the mountain. Now

if you desire to know when the souls of the saints shall be without wrinkle, when the spiritual heavens shall be "stretched out like pavilions" (Ps. ciii. 2)* which are extended in such a manner that not the least fold or pucker appears in them: that shall be only then when they "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth" (Apoc. xiv. 4). For the souls that would follow the Lamb must indeed be stretched out and extended. For whither goeth He? "He reacheth from end to end mightily and ordereth all things sweetly" (Wisdom viii. 1).

Perhaps you would like me to explain more fully whither the Lamb goeth and what is the necessity for the souls of the saints to follow Him? Listen to what He has said Himself by the mouth of the Wise Man, "In all things I have sought rest" (Ecclus. xxiv. 11). This manifestly is the rest of the Lord: not an interrupted rest, not a rest confined within any definite limits: for in all things He rejoices, He takes delight in all things, in all things He seeks and finds repose. He is pleased with all that is good for its own sake, but finds pleasure too in the good disposition of things that are in themselves evil. "He loveth mercy and judgment" (Ps. xxxii. 5); and He looks with complacency not alone upon the glory of the good but also upon the sufferings (as being justly inflicted) of the wicked†. What shall I say, brethren? Shall I suppose it possible for a human soul to enter into this joy of the Lord (Matt. xxv. 21), to participate in this rest of His, so that she too shall rejoice in all

* C.f. Sermon XXVII on the Canticle of Canticles.

† For fuller treatment of this subject c.f. Sermon VIII., on Psalm XC., pp. 195–205, vol. I of present series.

things and be no longer puckered into wrinkles by private affection but elevated to an affection that is all-embracing and divine? Yes, that is undoubtedly possible, provided she is faithful over the few things (ibid) entrusted to her stewardship during the time of her warfare, I mean her bodily members, her senses, and her appetites which she was given charge of, so that she might prove her fidelity to the Lord by her administration of them.

Therefore, the servant of Christ "should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour" (1 Thes. iv. 4) and to "glorify and bear God in his body" (1 Cor. vi. 20) and then, beyond a doubt, the Lord, Who is as generous as He is wealthy, "will place over many things" the servant whom He has found faithful over a few (Matt. xxv. 23). "Over many things," indeed, because He will "make him master of His house and ruler of all His possession" (Ps. civ. 21). Let not this appear incredible to you or as something spoken from myself, for it is the promise given by Truth itself, Whose word it would be impious to doubt. "Blessed is that servant," said the Saviour, "whom when his Lord shall come He shall find so doing: Amen, I say to you, He shall place him over all His goods" (Matt. xxiv. 46,47). Then shall the faithful servant be placed over all the goods of his Lord when he shall be found worthy to enter into the joy of his Lord, and with Him to rejoice evermore in all things, to find satisfaction in all things, to take delight in all things. For, as the Apostle says, "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit" with Him (1 Cor. vi. 17); and his will, absolutely conformed to the divine will, is made one therewith, so that there is

nothing now to oppose it in the whole universality of creatures, but all things fall out or rather all things immutably abide in accordance with its good pleasure.

This, then, is that "blessed hope" for which the souls of the saints are looking (Tit. ii. 13). And although they render never-ceasing thanks for the happiness and repose they already enjoy, they pray nevertheless and cry out to the Lord for the consummation which is still withheld from their desires. Hence, just as I have pronounced them free from the stains of past sin, yet not free from the wrinkles of present distraction: so can they be said to have already attained to the "voice of thanksgiving" but not yet to the "voice of praise" (Is. li. 3); for it is fitting that the perfect alone should praise the All-Perfect, so that He may be "praised with His inheritance" (Ps. cv. 5) when now, not only shall they give praise to Him, but every one of them also "shall have praise from God" (1 Cor. iv. 5). Hence the Prophet, as if with deliberate purpose, speaks in the future tense where he says, "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord, they shall praise Thee forever and ever" (Ps. lxxxiii. 5). And it is significant that St. John tells us in his Apocalypse that he heard, not the voice of praise, but the voice of supplication. For so we read: "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God and for the testimony which they held, and they cried with a loud voice." What did they cry? "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and revenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Apoc. vi. 9,10). This surely is the voice of prayer, not of praise. But, brethren, how long shall

we " surround the altar " (Ps. xxv. 6) at a distance and fear to approach ? Your charity, unless I mistake, longs to hear the secret of this altar and to know this sacred and most profound mystery. But who am I that I should lightly presume as a rash inquirer, to invade the sanctuary of the saints ? Have I not read that " the searcher of majesty shall be overwhelmed by glory " (Prov. xxv. 27) ? However, let us pause here for to-day, and let us knock in prayer at the door of the mystery of this altar : perchance the holy souls dwelling there will vouchsafe to open unto us, not for our sakes, but for the sake of Him " Who hath loved us and washed us from our sins in His own Blood " (Apoc. i. 5.), acknowledging us also as among the " fellow-citizens of the saints and the domestics of God " (Ephes. ii. 19), and not regarding us as " strangers and foreigners " (ibid.) and as such deserving to be excluded from that hidden but happy home.

FOURTH SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF ALL SAINTS.

On the Mystical Altar and Abraham's Bosom.

"Wheresoever the Body shall be, thither shall the eagles also be gathered together"—Luke xvii. 37.

In my last sermon I broke off, as I think your charity will remember, on coming to that celestial altar under which the blessed John heard the voices of the saints; to the end that, having sought heaven's assistance in humble prayer, we might thus find open to us a way more secure to this holy and secret sanctuary. It is now time to communicate to you what light has been vouchsafed me on this matter: without prejudice, however, to that which some other may have received. Well, then, the first difficulty to be faced is the fact that St. John testifies he saw the souls of the saints under the altar of God (Apoc. vi. 9), whereas the Saviour in the Gospel, speaking of the soul of Lazarus, affirms that it "was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom" (Luke xvi. 22). And holy Job did not presume (as it seems) to aspire to this altar of God, for he said, "Who will grant me this, that Thou mayest protect me in hell, and hide me till Thy wrath pass, and appoint me a time when Thou wilt remember me?" (Job xiv. 13). But, dearest brethren, that time had already come, the time prayed for by the holy Patriarch; the time of remembering, "the time to have mercy" (Ps. ci. 14) had already come

when the blessed John heard the voices of the saints under the altar. Before the advent of Him who was "the Desired of all nations" (Agg. ii. 8), before He had with His own Blood "blotted out the handwriting" (Col. ii. 14) of our condemnation, and, extinguishing the "flaming sword" (Gen. iii. 24), "opened to believers the kingdom of heaven" (Te Deum), none of the saints could by any possibility enter that abode of bliss; but God had provided for them a place of peace and refreshment in the very midst of hell, "fixing a great chaos" (Luke xvi. 26), however, between these blessed souls and the souls of the damned. For although all were in darkness, not all were in pain: the wicked indeed suffered torment, but there was consolation for the just. That even the souls of the saints dwelt in darkness we learn from the testimony of holy Job, who announced that he was going "to a land that is dark and covered with the mist of death" (Job x. 21). This, then, is the place, dim yet peaceful, which the Lord referred to as Abraham's bosom; for the reason, as I suppose, that Abraham was the type of all who rested in the faith and expectation of a Redeemer. For the faith of this father was so well proved and found so perfect that he deserved to be the first to receive the promise of the future incarnation of Christ (Gen. xxii. 18).*

The Saviour, therefore, descending into this place, "broke in pieces the gates of brass and burst the bars of iron" (Ps. cvi. 16; Is. xlv. 2), and "bringing forth the prisoners from the prison-house" (Is. xlii. 7) where they sat indeed, that is to say, rested, but "in

* Exactly the same explanation is given by St. Thomas in IV. dist. 45 q. 1, a. 2.

darkness and in the shadow of death" (Ps. cvi. 10), set them at last beneath the altar of God, "hiding them in His tabernacle in the day of evils, protecting them in the secret place of His tabernacle" (Ps. xxvi. 5), until the time comes when the number of "their brethren shall be filled up" (Apoc. vi. 11) and they shall issue forth to receive "the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world" (Matt. xxv. 34). But if you sometimes happen to hear even the present repose of the saints designated Abraham's bosom, this custom doubtless is derived from the Scriptures. Nevertheless we must hold it for certain that there is a wide difference between the former abode of the blessed and the present, since that was in darkness whilst this is in great light, that was in hell whilst this is in heaven. Not without reason, however, are the children of the Patriarch said to be received into their father's bosom even now, when they merit to pass from this world to the society of the saints.

Now with regard to that mystical altar which is the special subject of my discourse to-day, in my opinion it ought to be understood as nothing other than the Body of Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. And I think that in taking it thus I am not out of harmony with the Lord's own mind, the more especially as I hear Him promising in the Gospel, "Wheresoever the Body shall be, thither shall the eagles also be gathered together" (Luke xvii. 37). In the meantime, accordingly, the saints are in blissful repose under the Humanity of Christ, on which the very "angels desire to look" (1 Peter i. 12), until the day dawns when they shall be placed no longer beneath but

upon the altar. But what have I said? Which of the angels, not to speak of men, shall ever be able to reach, much less transcend that altar of the glory of the Humanity of Christ? In what sense therefore can it be said that the souls of the saints now resting under the altar shall hereafter be raised above it? Only by vision and contemplation, not in honour or dignity. For the Son will then manifest Himself to us (John xiv. 21) not as now, in the form of a servant, but in the form of God (Phil. ii. 6,7), according to His promise. He will also reveal to us the Father and the Holy Ghost, for without that vision nothing could satisfy us (ibid. 8); for "this is eternal life: that we may know the Father, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom He hath sent" (John xvii. 3), and in Them—as is evident—the Third Person also, the Spirit of the Father and the Son. Then, "passing He will minister unto us" (Luke xii. 37): replenishing our souls with the new and heretofore untasted delights springing from the contemplation of His unclouded majesty. Hence St. John the Evangelist says, in one of his Epistles, "Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God, and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be" (1 John iii. 2). And he adds, "We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like to Him: because we shall see Him as He is" (ibid.). Hear also the Spouse in the Canticle, exclaiming with confidence, and already in hope raised above the altar, "His left hand is under my head and His right hand shall embrace me" (Cant. ii. 6).

That is to say, the beatified soul shall be lifted above the mysteries of Christ's incarnation and His holy Humanity, which is justly called His left hand,

to the loftier contemplation of His Divinity, called with equal justice His right hand.*

My brethren, in that everlasting and blissful beatitude we shall enjoy our God in three different ways; for we shall see Him in all His creatures, we shall possess Him in ourselves, and—what is incomparably better and sweeter than either of these—we shall also contemplate the Trinity in Itself, gazing upon that supreme glory with the eye of a pure heart (Matt. v. 8), without any intermediary symbols (Num. xii. 8, 1 Cor.

* In this paragraph the Saint seems to subscribe the view condemned as heretical by the Councils of Florence and Trent: that the Beatific Vision of God is withheld from the souls of the just until their reunion with the body. But that such is not his meaning is made abundantly evident from numerous passages in his works. Thus in his Epistle to the Religious Communities in Ireland (cf. Vol. II. of this series, pp. 464-5), he cries out, addressing the soul of St. Malachy: "God forbid that we should consider Thy prayers less efficacious now, O holy soul, when in the very presence of the Divine Majesty, thou canst be more instant in supplication, when thou no longer walkest by faith but art crowned already with the vision of glory"; and in his second sermon on the same Saint he says: "Malachy now enjoys a glory and a happiness equal to that of the angels." How, then, are we to understand what is said here? The explanation is found in these words from Sermon LXXXVII *de Diversis*: "Before the general resurrection the souls of the saints can drink indeed but not to inebriation, because they cannot attain to the *most perfect* contemplation of God whilst yearning for re-union with the body." St. Bernard teaches, therefore, with SS. Augustine and Bonaventure, that although the souls of the saints already enjoy the intuitive vision of God and so have fulfilled their present capacity for happiness, they shall enjoy that vision more perfectly after the resurrection and by consequence a more perfect happiness—not only *extensive* as St. Thomas allows (I. 2, q. 4, a. 5) but also *intensive*. How it is that yearning for the body impedes perfect contemplation in the case of the just soul our Saint explains by telling us (*De Diligedo Deo*, c.xi.) that such yearning prevents the soul from forgetting herself utterly, as in complete inebriation, and so from passing wholly into God. This view thus explained is quite orthodox. Cf. Hurter, *Theol. Dogmat.* iii. 791, also note at page 323 Vol. I. of present series.—(Translator).

xiii. 12). For in this shall consist the eternal and perfect life we long for: that we shall know the Father and the Son with the Holy Spirit, and that we shall see God as He is: I mean, not alone shall we see Him as He is in us and in His other creatures, but as He is in Himself. It is possible, therefore, to regard the two former modes of vision as constituting a rind or shell and enclosing this third, in which alone is found perfect beatitude: this is the marrow of the wheat, the fat of the corn, wherewith the holy city of Jerusalem is satiated (Ps. cxlvii. 14). But the greater is that felicity, the more it is now concealed from our eyes, for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man" (1 Cor. ii. 9) to conceive what glory, what joy, what gladness is laid up for us in that vision. It is "the peace of God which surpasseth all understanding" (Phil. iv. 7): how much more all powers of expression? Consequently, let no one attempt to describe what it has been granted to none to experience. "Full (plenam) measure," says the Lord, "and pressed down and shaken together and running over shall they give into your bosom" (Luke vi. 38): "full measure" as including the totality of creatures, "pressed down" in our "interior man" (Ephes. iii. 16), "shaken together" as regards our exterior, "running over" in the direct vision of God. There, indeed, shall be found a superabundance of joy, glory excelling, and bliss overflowing.

How God shall be contemplated in His creatures and how we are to possess Him in ourselves, it is possible to conceive at least in some manner from those "first-fruits of the Spirit" (Rom. viii. 23) which we have already obtained. But as for the direct intuition

of the Divine Majesty, that is as yet altogether beyond our experience: it "is become wonderful to me, it is high and I cannot reach to it" (Ps. cxxxviii. 6). The case is different, as I have just said, with the vision of Him in creatures: we can understand to some extent how this shall be, because, namely, He is even now visible to us in this way. Hence even the pagan philosophers, as the Apostle bears witness, "understood the invisible things of God from the things that are made" (Rom. i. 20). Nevertheless, however far a man may go in comprehending with his mind the marvellous power and wisdom and benevolence wherewith that Eternal Majesty has made all things, governs and disposes all things, he shall never attain to anything more than the most inadequate idea of what He is in Himself. The time will come, however, when—as I remarked in the preceding discourse—we shall "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth" (Apoc. xiv. 4) and we shall find Him more perfectly in all His creatures, so that we shall rejoice in all, that is, we shall enter fully into the joy of the Lord our God (Matt. xxv. 21). Yes, we shall rejoice indeed in all things, but only because of Him, just as He is to Himself also the only motive of the joy He finds in His creatures.

We are also able to understand in some degree how we are to have Him in ourselves. It is evident that the soul is possessed of a threefold power: hence even the wise of this world have taught their disciples that the human soul is rational, irascible, and concupiscible; and we have proof of the truth of this in the nature of the soul as well as in our daily experience. It is further evident that, in the same way in which

knowledge and ignorance stand related to our reasoning faculty as perfection and privation, so do desire and disgust appertain to the concupiscible appetite, and joy and anger to the irascible. God, therefore, will replenish our understanding with the light of wisdom so that nothing whatever shall be wanting to us in any knowledge (1 Cor. i. 7). He will fill our concupiscible appetite from the fountain of justice, so that we shall long for it and be satiated with it, according to what is written, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice for they shall have their fill" (Matt. v. 6). For nothing else can satisfy the desire of the soul, nothing but justice can ever make her happy. When, therefore, our concupiscible appetite has been filled by God with justice, the soul will reject whatever ought to be rejected and will desire whatever ought to be desired; and amongst the various objects presented for her choice, she will always prefer that which ought to get the preference. Nor is it without reason I have assigned justice to the concupiscible faculty, since it is according to the disposition of this we are reputed just or unjust. Furthermore, when God fills what is called our irascible appetite we shall have in ourselves the most perfect tranquillity: divine peace shall overflow in us, producing unutterable gladness and joy. And consider if perfect beatitude, in as far as the soul is concerned, does not consist in this threefold endowment: the fulness of knowledge, of justice, and of joy: especially when knowledge cannot inflate us (1 Cor. viii. 1) on account of justice, or sadden us because of the joy: so that no longer applicable to us will be the saying of the Wise Man, "He that addeth knowledge addeth also sorrow"

(Eccles. i. 18, juxta LXX); when justice cannot any more be imprudent because of knowledge, or oppressive because of joy; and when joy in its turn shall be sobered by knowledge and purified by justice.

But all these graces are for the soul, and as yet our exterior man has received nothing. Therefore, in order "that glory may dwell in our earth" (Ps. lxxxiv. 10) that is, in our body also, and, as the same Prophet sings in another psalm, that "the whole earth may be filled with the majesty of the Lord" (Ps. lxxi. 19), four gifts are required for the body, which, as you know, is compounded of four elements.* And be not surprised that what is the more miserable in itself has need of more numerous endowments: for you have read what the Royal Prophet says in one of the psalms: "For Thee my soul hath thirsted; for Thee my flesh —Oh, how many ways!" (Ps. lxii. 2). Therefore, let this earth of our body be given immortality, so that it need no longer be afraid of being again reduced to dust. For the body "rising again from the dead, dieth now no more, death shall no longer have dominion over it" (Rom. vi. 9). But what avails this gift of immortality if our bodies are destined to live forever in the miseries and woes of this passible existence, in which, namely, our corruptible flesh is exposed to incessant affliction: if instead of dying once and for all they are destined to die eternally? Consequently, they require also the endowment of absolute impassibility to safeguard them

* The doctrine of four primitive substances, earth, air, fire and water, which in varying proportions enter into the constitution of all bodies, appears to have been first put forward by Empedocles of Agrigentum, 490-430 B.C. This author represents them as the four roots of all things—τέσσερα τῶν πάντων ῥιζώματα. The name "elements"—στοιχεῖα—was given them by Plato.—(Translator)

from all kinds of suffering, which have their cause, as we are told, in some disorder of the bodily humours. But the body wants another gift, even the gift of lightness—proper to that portion of itself which consists of air—so that it may not burden us with its weight. We must therefore believe that the glorified bodies of the blessed shall be so light and agile as to be able, if it is desired, to follow everywhere the rapid movements of thought, without the least delay or difficulty. Is there anything more required for the perfect beatitude of the body? One thing only, beauty. This quality, too, we shall possess in the highest degree; and I think we may justly attribute it to that one of our bodily elements which is of the nature of fire. Hence the Apostle says, "We look for the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who will reform the body of our lowness, made like to the body of His glory" (Phil. iii. 20,21), thus fulfilling what He has Himself promised: "Then shall the just shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. xiii. 43).

In this way, then, shall God fill our souls by infusing into them perfect knowledge, perfect justice, and perfect joy. In this way also shall "the whole earth be filled with His majesty" when this earth of our body is rendered incorruptible, impassible, agile, and "made like to the Body of His glory." And see, my brethren, whether these seven graces be not the seven loaves wherewith the Saviour is recorded to have satisfied the hunger of four thousand men, and with the fragments of which the Apostles filled seven baskets, to be reserved for a future time (Matt. xv. 36–38). For we are even now nourished with these loaves, whilst we ponder in joyous meditation the happiness

which is the object of our hope ; and we await the hour when, rejoicing no longer in hope but in actual possession and fruition, we shall be found worthy to receive the seven full baskets, as it were, in place of that which is our present portion, the seven single loaves. Amen.

FIFTH SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF ALL SAINTS.

On the Three Kinds of Sanctity and on the Communion of Saints.

"Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord; they shall praise Thee for ever and ever."—Ps. lxxxiii. 5.

To-day, dearest brethren, is a feast day for us, and a feast day that is counted amongst our grandest solemnities. How shall I call it? Of what apostle, of what martyr, of what saint shall I pronounce it the festival? But you know well enough that it is the feast, not of any one saint, but of all the saints together. We are none of us ignorant that the festivity which we celebrate to-day is called and truly is the festivity of All Saints. Yes, of All Saints, including both the saints of heaven and the saints of earth. For there are heaven-born saints and earth-born saints. Of the latter, some still abide on the earth and some have already gone to glory. On this day then, we keep a festival in honour of them all, although it may be we do not pay them all the same kind of honour. That indeed is nothing wonderful, since they have not all the same kind of sanctity: for saint differs from saint and that not a little. I am not now speaking of that difference whereby one saint is holier than another, for that is a difference rather of degree than of quality: I mean that the saints are said, and said truly, to differ from one another, not alone in degree but even in kind of sanctity. And perhaps I should

be right in affirming the difference between the sanctities of angels and holy men and between the honours paid to them to be one of kind. For evidently they who are known to have never fought cannot be honoured as victors, nevertheless as "Thy friends, O God, they are made exceedingly honourable" (Ps. cxxxviii. 17), for that they have always remained submissive to Thy will with as much delight as facility. But perhaps they may be said to have fought in this sense: that, when their brother-angels apostatised, they stood resolutely firm and took no part in the wicked conspiracy, but said each to himself, "It is good for me to adhere to my God" (Ps. lxxii. 28). Consequently, what we are to celebrate in the holy angels is the triumph of grace "preventing them with the blessings of sweetness" (Ps. xx. 4); what we are to honour is the "benignity of God," not now "leading to penance" (Rom. ii. 4), but protecting them from everything that would require penance; not delivering them from temptation but safeguarding them from its approach.

But very different in itself and demanding to be honoured in a different way is the sanctity we find in them "who have come out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb" (Apoc. vii. 14), who after many combats have triumphed at last and are now crowned in heaven because they "strove lawfully" (2 Tim. ii. 5). Is there yet another kind of sanctity or species of saints? Yes, there is, my brethren, but it is hidden. For there are saints who are still under arms, who have still to fight, who run still and have not yet reached the goal (1 Cor. ix. 24). Perhaps you consider me imprudent in giving the title of saints

to such? But I know one of them who was not afraid to say to God, "Preserve my soul, for I am a saint" —quoniam sanctus sum (Ps. lxxxv. 2). So too the Apostle, that confidant of the divine secrets, declared in language equally clear, "We know that to them that love God all things work together unto good, to such as according to His purpose are called saints" (Rom. viii. 28). It is manifest, therefore, that the title of saint is used with a diversity of meaning, so that some are called saints because they have already reached the consummation of sanctity, and others are similarly designated who are as yet but the predestinate. The sanctity of these latter, therefore, is God's secret: it is hidden from us, and hence honoured by us in a hidden manner, so to speak. For "man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred, but all things are kept uncertain for the time to come" (Eccles. ix. 1,2). In the heart of God, consequently, let the feast of such saints be celebrated, for "the Lord knoweth who are His," He knoweth whom He hath chosen from the beginning of the world (Ephes. i. 4); let it be celebrated also by the "ministering spirits sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation" (Heb. i. 14); as for us, we are forbidden to praise any man before his death (Ecclus. xi. 30). How indeed can praise be securely given so long as life itself is insecure? No man "is crowned except he strive lawfully" cries out St. Paul, speaking as heaven's own herald. And the law of the combat is thus proclaimed by the Divine Legislator Himself: "He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved" (Matt. x. 22). You, my brethren, know not who shall persevere, you know

not who shall "strive lawfully" nor, by consequence, who shall be crowned.

Let us praise, then, only the virtue of those who are already assured of victory; let us extol with fervent eulogies those whom we can safely felicitate on their having won the crown. In the Office last night we sang to the saints, "Fear the Lord, all ye His saints" (Ps. xxxiii. 10): but it was not to the saints in bliss we addressed that warning. No, I repeat, it was not the saints who have persevered unto the end that we exhorted to fear the Lord, since of them it is said, "They shall be in their land without fear" (Ezech. xxxiv. 27). But we spoke to those other saints who have still need of manifold watchfulness because of the multitudinous dangers which surround them. "For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood (merely) but (also) against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places" (Ephes. vi. 12). Yes, my brethren, they assuredly require to be on their guard who are exposed to so many assaults, not only at close quarters but even from a distance. And where there are so many "combats without, fears within" (2 Cor. vii. 5) should not be wanting. Not without reason, therefore, is it said to the saints still in exile, "Fear the Lord, all ye His saints." Indeed it may be said that all our blessedness during this mortal existence consists in the fear of God. Hence these words of the Wise Man, "Blessed is the man that is always fearful" (Prov. xxviii. 14), and these of the Psalmist, "Blessed are all they that fear the Lord, that walk in His ways" (Ps. cxxvii. 1). But blessed in a widely different way are they in whom

already "perfect charity hath cast out fear" (1 John iv. 18); who, consequently are no longer obliged to walk in fear the ways of the Lord, but rather praise Him unceasingly as inmates of His house, according to the testimony of the Royal Prophet: "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord; they shall praise Thee for ever and ever" (Ps. lxxxiii. 5). For us, therefore, so long as we live here below, there can be neither felicity nor festivity apart from the fear of God; whereas the blessed in heaven feast and find their happiness in unending praise and exultation.

Here, my brethren, you have the reason why we can safely praise only such men as live no longer by their own human lives but now by the life of God: because "the life of man upon earth is a warfare" (Job vii. 1). And there are two causes for the security of the praise offered to them: although when the matter is carefully examined they will appear perhaps to be implied in one another. In the first place, we have nothing to fear in praising those who are most truly and certainly worthy of praise, nor, secondly, is there any reason why we should be afraid to glorify them who are so completely swallowed up in true glory as to be in no danger of vain glory from our expressions of esteem. For there is no room for vanity in minds that are wholly filled with truth. But you may ask me, what is the glory of the saints? For it is certain they do not glorify themselves, since it is written, "Let another praise thee, and not thine own mouth" (Prov. xxvii. 2). Neither do they glorify one another, because they have no leisure to indulge in mutual commendations, being wholly occupied with the praise of the

Creator in Whom alone they find all their happiness, according to those words of the Prophet which I have already cited: "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord, they shall praise Thee for ever and ever." Nevertheless I cannot bring myself to believe that the saints of God are devoid of all glory, particularly on account of what the Apostle has said: "That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. iv. 17); and those other words of the Psalmist, "Remember us, O Lord, in the favour of Thy people, visit us with Thy salvation, that we may see the good of Thy chosen, that we may rejoice in the joy of Thy nation, that Thou mayest be praised with Thy inheritance" (Ps. cv. 4, 5). Observe, the Psalmist does not say, "That Thou mayest be praised by Thy inheritance," but "*with* Thy inheritance," in order to give us to understand that the praise shall be common to the Lord and His saints. But if the Lord is praised by His inheritance, by whom shall His inheritance be praised? Let the Apostle inform us: "Then," says he, "shall every man have praise." Praise from whom? "From God" (1 Cor. iv. 5). A noble Eulogist, indeed, and a eulogy deserving to be most ardently desired. O happy interchange of commendations wherein to praise and to be praised are each and equally a source of delight!

To what purpose, then, it may be asked, is our praise of the saints, our glorification of the saints, our solemnities in their honour? What need have they of earthly honours who are honoured by the Heavenly Father Himself, according to the Son's infallible promise? (John xii. 26). How can they be

in want of our commendations? They are full, they desire no more (Is. i. 11). Such in truth is the case, most dearly beloved. The saints have no need of honours from us, nor does our devotion add aught to their happiness. In venerating their memory, therefore, we profit not them but ourselves. And would you like to know how much we profit ourselves? I confess to you, dearest brethren, the thought of this enkindles in my soul a most vehement desire, or rather a threefold desire. It is a common saying that "what the eye beholdeth not the heart doth not feel." Now, my eye is my intellect, and to think of the saints is in some sense to see them. This is "my portion in the land of the living" (Ps. cxli. 6), and no insignificant portion, provided only that thought be accompanied by ardent affection. So can we say that "our conversation is in heaven" (Phil. iii. 20), but not in the same manner as the conversation of the blessed. For they are substantially there, we as yet only in desire; they are there by actual presence, we but in thought. Oh, when shall we be admitted to the society of our fathers? when shall it be granted us to hear their words of welcome, no longer in desire but in reality! This is the first desire which the memory of the saints either excites or increases in us: that we may enjoy their sweet companionship, and that we may deserve to be the fellow-citizens and associates of the holy angels, to be admitted into the company of patriarchs, the assembly of prophets, the august senate of apostles, the numerous army of martyrs, the college of confessors, the choir of virgins; in a word, that we may be numbered and rejoice in the communion of all the saints.

The thought of any one of these several orders of the blessed is as a single spark or rather as a flaming torch for enkindling the devout heart and making it thirst to behold and embrace them; so that sometimes a person even fancies himself among the saints, saluting with all the eagerness and ardour of his soul, now these, now those, now all together. But as for us, dearest brethren, what means this indifference of ours, this sloth, or rather this stupidity, that we do not endeavour by frequent sighs and burning affections to lift ourselves aloft and to shoot our very souls (*jaculari animos*) into the midst of those happy bands? Woe to us because of the hardness of our hearts! Woe to us bcause of the sin of the gentiles who, as the Apostle bears witness, were "without affection" (Rom. i. 31). "The Church of the first-born" (Heb. xii. 23)* yearns for us and we have no eagerness to join it! The saints are desirous of our company and we remain unconcerned! "The just wait for us" (Ps. cxli. 8) and we refuse to make haste! Let us arouse ourselves at last, brethren. Let us arise with Christ, let us "seek the things that are above," let us "mind the things that are above" (Col. iii. 1). Let us long for those who are longing for us, let us hasten to those who are waiting for us, let us anticipate with the desires of our hearts those who are looking out for our advent. Consider this well: in our common life here there is nothing secure, nothing perfect, nothing tranquil; and nevertheless we too can say with the Psalmist, "Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Ps. cxxxii. 1). For whatever affliction befalls us, whether it be from within

* The holy angels, that is.—(Translator.)

or from without, is rendered more easy to endure by the very companionship of our dear brethren, with whom we have "but one heart and one soul" (Acts iv. 32). What therefore can be so sweet, what so delightful, what so blissful as that celestial society where there is never any distrust, never any occasion of discord, but where all are bound together in the indissoluble bands of perfect charity: so that, as the Father and the Son are one, we likewise shall be one in Them? (John xvii. 21).

But, my brethren, it is not merely the society of the saints we should long for: their happiness also should be the object of our desire, so that we ought to seek with all ardour a participation in the glory of them for whose society we yearn. There is no danger in ambition of this kind, the desire of heavenly glory involves no risk. As for what the Psalmist says: "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Thine own name give glory" (Ps. cxiii. 9): this refers to the present life, as do also the words of the angels: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will" (Luke ii. 14). "Do not touch Me for I am not yet ascended to My Father" (John xx. 17): here you have the voice of Substantial Glory, since it is written that "a wise son is the glory of his father" (Prov. x. 1). It is glory, then, that says to us, "Touch me not." We must not seek it but rather shun it in this present life: we must be careful to have nothing to do with it until we ascend to the Father, where at last all glorying shall be secure. There "in the Lord shall my soul be praised, let the meek hear and rejoice" (Ps. xxxiii. 3). Does it not seem as if the Bride in the Canticle had heard her Bridegroom saying, "Do not

touch Me, for I am not yet ascended to My Father," when she exclaimed, "Flee away, my Beloved" (Cant. xiii. 14)? For these her words are identical in sense with those already cited from the Psalmist: "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Thine own name give glory." Hence in the hymn of to-day's Office we sang:—

"Lord, we Thy servants peace of Thee implore
That we may sing Thy glory evermore."*

Man's life upon earth being a continual temptation, it is only right and reasonable that he should here pursue, not glory, but peace: peace with God, peace with his neighbour, peace with himself. "O Keeper of men," cries out Holy Job, "why hast Thou set me opposite to Thee, and I am become burthensome to myself?" (Job vii. 20). It is assuredly a near contest and an intestine sedition, not a civil but a domestic war, that in which "the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh" (Gal. v. 17). And to what is it due if not to the fact that Thou, O Lord, "hast set me opposite to Thee?" For Thou art True Liberty, Thou art Life, Thou art Glory, Thou art Sufficiency, Thou art Beatitude; whereas I am poor, and wretched, and miserable, confounded and humbled in every way, "dead because of sin" (Rom. viii. 10), and "sold under sin" (Rom. vii. 14). Thou Who art perfect and holy Delight, the everlasting Repose of the blessed spirits, hast set me from the very beginning in opposition to Eden—which signifies delight—in labour and in pain. Nevertheless

* "Da pacem famulis, nos quoque gloriam,
Per cuncta Tibi saecula."
From Vesper Hymn for the Feast of Many Martyrs. (Translator.)

Thou sayest to us, "Be converted to Me with all your heart" (Joel ii. 12). It is evident we have turned away from Him since we are thus invited to return; it is evident we have been opposed to Him since He wants us to become reconciled. But, my brethren, how are we to be converted to Him? He tells us Himself: "In fasting, and in weeping, and in mourning" (ibid.). Strange! Are we then to believe that Thou, our God, dwellest in fasting, abidest in weeping, livest in mourning? Far be this from Thee! Far, far be Thou from all such things! For thy throne is in Jerusalem which Thou dost "satiate with the fat of corn" (Ps. cxlvii. 3), and in which there is "neither mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow" (Apoc. xxi. 4), but only "thanksgiving and the voice of praise" (Is. li. 3). "Let the just feast," sings the Psalmist, "and rejoice before God, and be delighted with exultation and gladness" (Ps. lxvii. 3). Wherefore, then, does He tell us to be converted to Him "in fasting and in weeping and in mourning"? Can it be that the just shall find Him in "exultation and gladness," and they who are not yet just only "in fasting and in weeping and in mourning"? So in truth it is, my brethren; but I am speaking of the just who have actually attained to vision, not of such as still "live by faith" (Gal. iii. 11). But the words of the Lord: "I am with him in tribulation" (Ps. xc. 15), are obviously spoken of him who "walketh by faith" rather than of him who has already arrived at vision (2 Cor. v. 7). It is true, the Head of both is one and the same Christ, yet not in the same manner does that Head exhibit Itself unto all Its members. For to some It appears all bristling with thorns and bowed

upon the Cross, so that they may participate alike in Its humiliation and in Its compunction* ; to others It reveals Itself all radiant in glory in order to communicate glory to them, in order that they may glory in their God, being made like to Him because they now " see Him as He is " (John i. 2).

This, then, is the second desire which the commemoration of the saints excites in our souls : that, as to them, so also to us, Christ may appear as our life and that we also may " appear with Him in glory " (Col. iii. 4). In the meantime our Divine Head is presented to our contemplation, not as He is in Himself, but in the state to which His charity towards us has reduced Him : crowned, not with heavenly glory, but with the thorns of our sins, according to what is written : " Go forth, ye daughters of Sion, and see King Solomon in the diadem wherewith His mother hath crowned Him " (Cant. iii. 11). Oh, what a King, and what a diadem ! The synagogue is the mother, who, acting here rather the part of a stepmother than of a true mother, has crowned our King with a crown of thorns. Surely now it would be a shame for the members to seek after glory when they have seen their Head overwhelmed with such ignominy, without beauty or comeliness or any other attraction (Is. liii. 2). For He is the true Solomon, that is to say, the Pacific One, and it is in this character He reveals Himself to us in the present life as the source of our peace rather than of our beatitude or glory—in order to confirm in every respect the words of the

* " Compungantur." There is a play upon this word : in the one case it is to be understood in its etymological and literal sense, in the other according to its figurative signification.—(Translator.)

holy angels whereby they assigned peace to earth and glory to heaven. Surely also it would be a shame for anyone to show himself a delicate member under a thorn-crowned Head, Who whilst on earth was clothed in purple indeed, but in the purple of mockery, not that of majesty (Mark xv. 17). Nevertheless you may still behold this festival day honoured in many places, not without much evidence of sensuality and pride. Is "honoured" the proper word, or should I rather have said "dishonoured"? I will leave it to them to decide who are accustomed to this manner of observing the feast. In fact it is a feast of their own such people observe, not a feast in honour of the saints; because they do what they like themselves, not what they know the saints would be pleased with. But the day will dawn when Christ shall come and His death shall be announced no longer (1 Cor. xi. 26), that we may know that we also are dead and that our life is hidden with Him in God (Cor. iii. 3). Our Head shall appear in glory, and shining with the Head shall appear the glorified members, when, namely, He "shall reform the body of our lowness," made like to the glory of our Head, that is, of Himself (Phil. iii. 21). Let us, therefore, dearest brethren, seek after that glory with all ambition and without any fear, lest perchance to us also it should sometime be said, "You receive glory one from another, and the glory which is from God alone you do not seek" (John v. 44).

Surely, then, in order that we may hope for such glory and aspire to such bliss, we ought to solicit most earnestly the suffrages of the saints, "so that what our own merit is insufficient to obtain may be granted us through their intercession" (Prayer of the Church). "Have pity on me," so let us cry to

them, "have pity on me, at least you my friends" (Job xix. 21). You know the dangers to which we are here exposed, you know the clay of which we are fashioned, you know our ignorance, you know the cunning wiles of our enemies, you know their violence and our weakness: for I speak to you who have been exercised in the same temptations, who have come forth triumphant from the same conflicts, who have escaped the same snares, and who have learned compassion from the things you have suffered (Heb. v. 8). I have also confidence in the holy angels: that they will not disdain to comfort their kind, especially as it is written, "Visiting thy species thou shalt not sin" (Job v. 24). But whilst feeling persuaded that I may presume much on the love of these blessed spirits, because of my resemblance and relationship to them in the spirituality and rationality of my substance, it seems to me, nevertheless, that I ought to have greater confidence in those who, as I know, participate with me in the same human nature, and therefore ought to feel a more affectionate and tender compassion for one that is bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh (Gen. ii. 23).

Moreover, when "passing out of this world to the Father" (John xiii. 1), they left behind with us most precious pledges. For amongst us "their bodies are buried in peace, and their name liveth unto generation and generation" (Ecclus. xliv. 14), that is to say, their glory shall never be forgotten. Far removed from you, O blessed souls, far removed from you be the cruelty of Pharao's cup-bearer, who, when restored to his former place, immediately forgot holy Joseph, still pining in prison (Gen. xl.). For these two were not (as we are) members of the one same

Head: the faithful soul hath nothing in common with the unbeliever, neither can the Israelite have fellowship with the Egyptian, any more than light with darkness. The name "Egypt" in fact means "darkness," whilst Israel signifies "one seeing God." Hence we are told that "wheresoever the children of Israel dwelt there was light" (Exod. x. 23). Not so did our Lord Jesus forget the thief who was crucified with Him. No, the promise given was fulfilled and His companion in suffering was summoned that same day to be His companion in glory. Dearest brethren, we are the members of the same Head as the saints. If not, what mean the solemn services and the manifestations of loving devotion wherewith we congratulate them to-day? But he who said, "If one member glory, all the members rejoice with it," said also, "If one member suffer anything, all the members suffer with it" (1 Cor. xii. 26). Such, consequently, is the union between the saints in heaven and the faithful on earth, that whilst we congratulate them on their happiness, they sympathise with us in our misery; we share in their glory by devout meditation, and they by their loving intercession fight in us and for us. Nor have we any reason to doubt their solicitude in our behalf, because since they cannot be "consummated without us" (Heb. xi. 4), as I remarked in the preceeding discourse, they wait for us until we likewise receive our reward (Ps. cxli. 8): so that in the last grand festival day all the members shall "meet together unto a perfect man" (Ephes. iv. 13), in union with their august Head, and then at last shall He "be praised with His inheritance," Jesus Christ our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed and praised and glorified for ever. Amen.

THE SERMONS WHICH FOLLOW BELONG TO ST. BERNARD'S MISCELLANEOUS DISCOURSES, COMMONLY KNOWN AS "SERMONES DE DIVERSIS"

ON THE DECEITFULNESS AND BREVITY OF THE PRESENT LIFE.

'*That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.*"—2 Cor. iv. 17.

Very true, dearest brethren, is that saying of holy Job, that "the life of man upon earth is a temptation" (Job vii. 1). For this earthly life is full of deceit: it is wont to deceive us, not in one manner only, but in different ways. And to multiply its modes of mocking us, it is accustomed to alter both its face and its voice. It affirms at one time what it denies at another, and appears to have no sense of shame. It speaks differently to different persons with regard to its duration; nay, even to the same person at different times it says things inconsistent and contrary. Thus it will now complain of its shortness, and later pretend that it is very long. It will lament its brevity so long as sin continues to be a source of delight. I do not say that the brevity is deceptive, but that the lamentation is without reason: for that is made a motive of grief which should rather be a cause of consolation. For it is good for a man who is resolved to persevere in sin that, since he will not put a period

to his disorders of his own free choice, at least the necessity of dying should do so. It is expedient, I say, for him who is enduring a never-ceasing death in his soul, to undergo without delay the death of the body: although "it were better for him if that man had not been born" (Matt. xxvi. 24). And the very thought of the shortness of life, so far from becoming an incentive to sin, ought rather to serve as a remedy against it, according to the words of the Wise Man: "In all thy works remember thy last end and thou shalt never sin" (Ecclus. vii. 40). But even if sin has such dominion over thee (Rom. vi. 12), even though it is such a delight to thee to be the servant of sin (John viii. 34) that thou art grieved at the shortness of the time which thou canst spend in its service; even though thou art so much in love with the broad way (Matt. vii. 13), that, if thou couldst, thou wouldst make it likewise a long way: whether thou desirest it or not, the end of thy earthly course is near enough; but thou, I confess, "art far from the kingdom of God" (Mark xii. 34) and seemest to have formed a most firm "league with death and to have made a covenant with hell" (Is. xxviii. 15).

"They wandered in a wilderness," sings the Psalmist, "in a place without water: they found not the way of a city for their habitation" (Ps. cvi. 4). This wilderness, dearest brethren, is the solitude of the proud. For the proud man esteems himself alone and desires to be esteemed alone by others also. If he is one with a reputation for scholarship, he cannot endure a rival; if he is well versed in worldly affairs, he wishes that there should be none like himself; if he has wealth, the prosperity of others is a

torment to him; if he enjoys the fame of being a man of courage or beauty, the thought of having an equal makes him wither away. Thus, the proud man is always in a wilderness and always a wanderer. He is a homeless vagrant in his own solitude, because such a solitary can have no habitation upon the earth. Nor is it anything strange that the Prophet further describes this wilderness of the proud as "a place without water," saying, "They wandered in a wilderness, in a place without water." For just as in natural solitudes water is wont to be scarce, and desert places are also as a rule sterile and arid: so is impenitence the usual companion of pride. The heart that is lifted up is obdurate and empty of piety, a stranger to compunction, moistened by no dews of spiritual grace; because it is written, "God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble" (James iv. 6), and the Psalmist says, speaking to the Lord, "Thou sendest forth springs in the deep valleys, in the midst between the hills the waters shall pass" (Ps. ciii. 10). Hence that piteous cry in which the same Prophet laments his own wretchedness: "My soul is as earth without water unto Thee" (Ps. cxlii. 6). But, my brethren, the want of water is the cause of filthiness as well as of aridity, since washing cannot be done without it: and therefore the human heart that is unacquainted with contrite tears must necessarily be found not alone dry and obdurate, but impure as well. "Every night," said holy David, "I will wash my bed" (Ps. vi. 7), that is, I will remove the stains of my conscience; "and I will water my couch with my tears" (ibid.), lest in my case also should be verified what is written of the seed that fell upon the stony ground: which

withered as soon as it had sprung up, because it had no moisture (Matt. xiii. 6).

"They wandered in a wilderness, in a place without water: they found not the way of a city." Yes, indeed, they "wandered where there was no passing, and out of the way" (Ps. cvi. 40). For the broad way is not properly a way at all. Ways ought to be straight and narrow, but breadth is more the property of plains than of paths. Now the way through a wilderness is manifestly a broad way; and in a certain sense where there is no way the whole is a way. Such, my brethren, is a life abandoned to sin, extending widely in all directions, because it is enclosed within no fixed bounds; although in truth that does not deserve to be called life by which one lives only unto death, as the Apostle bears witness: "If you live according to the flesh you shall die" (Rom. viii. 13). Neither ought a circuit to be called a way, although it is the way of the wicked, as it is written, "The wicked walk in a circuit" (Ps. xi. 9). It is a most spacious way, the breadth whereof is undefined by any limits, a way in which there is neither law nor transgression (Rom. iv. 15). To those, therefore, who walk in this way, that is, to "the children of unbelief" (Ephes. ii. 2) who abandon themselves wholly to bodily pleasures and to the following of their own wills, life, truthfully deceitful (*fiducialiter fallax*), represents itself to be short; so that the knowledge that they, like their prince, have but a short time (Apoc. xii. 12) may fill them with carnal sorrow and urge them onward more impetuously into every sinful excess. It is such reckless sinners whom Solomon introduces as saying, "Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments, and let not the flower of the

time pass by us; let us crown ourselves with roses before they be withered, let no meadow escape our riot, let none of us go without his part in luxury, let us leave everywhere tokens of joy: for this is our portion and this is our lot" (Wisdom ii. 7–10). And the same sentiments are more clearly expressed in the words, "Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we shall die" (Is. xxii. 13). That indeed is true: their injustice shall make answer to them to-morrow (Gen. xxx. 33); even they "have not here a lasting city" (Heb. xiii. 14), since "they found not the way of a city for their habitation." But in that they make the shortness of life a motive for sinning more recklessly, they are surely mad.

Nevertheless, should these same persons ever begin to feel alarmed at the thought of the proximity of death and to shudder at the terrifying prospect of the coming judgment: immediately this deceitful life falsely represents or misrepresents itself to their imagination as of great length; with the result that they who, a little before, were lamenting the shortness of the time left for indulgence in sin, seem now all at once to discover such an extension in their earthly course as to make them believe they can safely squander a good deal more of it in sensual gratification: afterwards there will be time enough for the performance of penance. But just as in the case of the sinners who are afraid of death, "the fear which they fear shall come upon them" (Job iii. 25), unless they repent, nay, something far worse than what they fear shall befall them, for not alone shall the time opportune for sinning pass speedily away, but it shall be followed by a time, or rather by an eternity, of punishment: so too with

these latter, "when they shall say: peace and security: then shall sudden destruction come upon them" (Thes. v. 3), and they "shall not live out half the days" (Ps. liv. 24) which they foolishly hope to enjoy. No, I repeat, they shall not fulfil even half the number of days which they now so confidently promise themselves.

But so far as you are concerned, most dearly beloved, I have no cause for fear, either from vain sorrow on account of the real shortness of life, or from delusive consolation caused by its apparent length: since it is most certain that you have already begun to walk in "the way of the city of your habitation," and no longer "wander where there is no passing and out of the way." Nevertheless I am not without anxiety lest this our mortal existence should deceive you also, though in a different way, by representing itself to your thoughts as of long duration, not in order to comfort but to cast you down. Yes, dearest brethren, I fear lest some one amongst us, believing that many long years of life yet remain to him and that he "has yet a great way to go" (3 Kings xix. 7), should be oppressed by "pusillanimity of spirit" (Ps. liv. 9) and despair of being able to endure such hardships for so long a time; forgetting that, according to the multitude of the sorrows in the hearts of His elect, the consolations of the Lord give gladness to their souls (Ps. ciii. 19). Such is the law of the present life: we receive divine consolations in proportion to our sorrows, and consequently in measure. But hereafter we shall experience the truth of what the Psalmist says, speaking to God: "At Thy right hand are delights—not now mere consolations—even to the end" (Ps. xv. 11),

that is, without measure. My brethren, let us long for that right hand which shall embrace our whole being, let us yearn for the delights which that hand contains, so that the time of labour, which in truth is very short, may to us "seem but a few days because of the greatness of our love" (Gen. xxix. 20). "For the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us" (Rom. viii. 18). Oh, most gladdening promise, worthy to be received with all the affections of the soul! It is not as empty and idle spectators we shall stand in the presence of our God, nor shall His glory be made manifest to us as something outside ourselves. No, but it "shall be revealed in us." We shall see the Lord "face to face" (1 Cor. xiii. 12), yet not as without us; because He will dwell in our very hearts as being now "all in all" (1 Cor. xii. 6). For if, as the Psalmist sings, "the whole earth shall be filled with His Majesty" (Ps. lxxi. 19), how much more the souls of the saints? "We shall be filled," says the Psalmist in another place, "with the good things of Thy house" (Ps. lxiv. 5). But why do I say that then glory shall be within us rather than around us? Even now it is within us, although it shall not be revealed in us until then. For "we are now the sons of God, and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be" (1 John iii. 2).

My brethren, if "we have not received the spirit of this world but the spirit that is of God," we ought to "know the things that are given us from God" (1 Cor. ii. 12). Do you ask what things are these? I answer: all things. And if you will not believe my word, believe the Apostle's. "He that spared

not His own Son," so we read in the Epistle to the Romans, " but delivered Him up for us all, how hath He not also with Him given us all things ? " (Rom. viii. 32). This is indeed the power proper to the sons of God which He hath given to as many as have received Him (John i. 12) ; this is the glory of every faithful Christian, the glory, as it were, of the adopted children of the Father, adopted through Him Whose glory we have seen, " the glory as it were of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth " (ibid. 14). And hear from the Lord Himself how great that power is : " All things," He says, " are possible to him that believeth " (Mark ix. 22).

" But," some brother may answer me, " there are many things which still cause us great annoyance, many which are still unmistakably opposed to us. And I wonder how thou canst be so paradoxical as to affirm that all things have been given unto the hands of those who find hardly any creature docile to their will. True, there are some creatures that appear to serve us, but only at the cost of much labour on our part and not until we have first served them. Our very beasts of burden, for example, will be of no use to us unless we take the trouble to rear them, to train them, and to supply them with food. Even mother earth itself, from which we had a right to expect more kindly treatment, will only provide us with bread in the sweat of our brow (Gen. iii. 19) ; yea, and even when we cultivate it, thorns and thistles does it bring forth to us (ibid. 18). And so with all the rest, as will be evident to anyone who carefully considers the matter : they rather require our services than accommodate us with theirs—to say nothing about

those creatures that are ready to work us harm: fire to burn us, water to drown us, wild animals to tear us to pieces." I grant the truth of all this. Nevertheless the Apostle does not lie in affirming that the Father "hath given us all things," which he repeats in clearer terms in another place, saying that "he knows that to them who love God all things work together unto good, to such as according to His purpose are called to be saints" (Rom. viii. 28). But note carefully what is said: that all things work together for us unto good, not that they are obedient to our wishes. For they subserve not our will but our profit, they minister not to our pleasure but to our salvation, they contribute not to the satisfaction of our desires but to the promotion of our eternal interests. In this sense all things do undoubtedly work together unto good for us, not even excepting those which are reputed to have no independent existence, such as afflictions, diseases, death, and even our very sins—all of which, as is evident, are rather the corruptions of substantial natures than substances themselves. Can it be denied that their sins co-operate unto good for those who after sinning are found more humble, more fervent, more anxious, more timid, more cautious than before?

This co-operation of all creatures unto the good of the elect is the "first fruits of the Spirit" (Rom. viii. 23), the first fruits of the kingdom prepared for us, the foretaste of our glory, the beginning of our power, the pledge, so to speak, of our immortal inheritance. "But when that which is perfect shall come, that which is in part shall be done away" (1 Cor. xiii. 10), so that thenceforward all things shall be

disposed in accordance with our inclinations: for then pleasure and profit shall be bound together in an indissoluble unity and can never again be divorced. It is thus we shall enjoy that "eternal weight of glory" whereof the Apostle delights to speak. "That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation," he says, "worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. iv. 17). And wilt thou, my brother, be so foolish and cowardly as to murmur after this and to say, "The time is too long, the burden is too heavy, I cannot endure hardships so severe and so protracted." St. Paul accounted all that he suffered "momentary and light," and certainly his sufferings were greater than thine. For thou hast not yet, "received five times of the Jews forty stripes save one" (2 Cor. xi. 24), not yet hast thou been "a night and a day in the depth of the sea" (ibid. 25), not yet canst thou say, "I have laboured more abundantly than all they" (1 Cor. xv. 10), finally, thou hast "not yet resisted unto blood" (Heb. xii. 4). See, therefore, how true it is "that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come." "That which is of our tribulation" is "momentary and light," whereas the glory it "worketh for us" is eternal and a "weight above measure exceedingly." To what purpose dost thou assign thyself so many days and years in the uncertain future? The hours go by and with them the crosses wherewith they come laden. As regards these, there is no accumulation, no addition of new to old: they rather yield place and succeed to one another. But it is otherwise with the glory, it is otherwise with the reward, it is otherwise with the fruit of our labour.

That is subject to no vicissitude, it can have no end, it endures all together, and shall endure to everlasting. "When He shall give sleep to His beloved," sings the Psalmist, "behold the inheritance of the Lord" (Ps. cxxvi. 2, 3). Now "sufficient for each day is the evil thereof" (Matt. vi. 34), nor can any day hand on its burden of toil to the following; but the reward of all our labours shall be rendered to us on that day to which none other shall succeed. Hence the Apostle says, "There is laid up for me a crown of justice which the Lord, the just judge, will render to me—not in *those days*, but—in *that day*" (2 Tim. iv. 8): "for better is one day in Thy courts, O Lord, above thousands" (Ps. lxxxiii. 11). Thus in this life pain is drunk by us only drop by drop, it percolates to us, so to speak, through the tiny pores of a filter; but in the reward we shall find "a torrent of pleasure" (Ps. xxxv. 9), "the current of a river" (Ps. xlv. 5), an inundating flood of gladness, a very river of glory, "a river of peace" (Is. lxvi. 12). A river that bliss deserves in truth to be called, not that it flows past and away, but because it flows into us. It is called a river, I say, not because it flows by us or through us, but in order to indicate its abundance.

"That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." Observe, dearest brethren, that what is promised us here is glory itself, not anything glorious, such as a glorious house or glorious garments. And if sometimes there is mention of these or things similar, that is only the language of metaphor. For truly "the expectation of the just is joy" (Prov. x. 28), pure joy, not merely something

joyous. The men of this world find pleasure in food, they find pleasure in pomp, they find pleasure in riches and even in vice. But "mourning taketh hold of the end of such joy" (Prov. xiv. 13), because joy in a changeable object must necessarily perish in the corruption of its source. A taper is lit: the light which results is not pure light, but a light dependent on the support of a foreign element. For the flame consumes what upholds it in being and cannot live otherwise than by this consumption. Hence it must fail as soon as the material fails, you shall see the light extinguished the moment the wax is exhausted. As then the light of our taper is followed by darkness and smoke, so shall the joy from a corruptible object be changed into sadness.

But for us, dearest brethren, it is not a honey-comb the Lord hath laid up: it is rather the honey itself in its most pure and liquid state. The Lord our God, I say, has prepared for us, His children, a treasure of joy unmixed, of life, of glory, of peace, of pleasure, of sweetness, of happiness, of delight and exultation. And all these are one, for Jerusalem is a city whose participation is without distinction (Ps. cxxi. 3). And this one thing is none other than the Lord our God Himself, according to the Apostle's testimony, already quoted: "That God may be all in all" (1 Cor. xv. 28). Such is our reward, such our crown, such the prize for which we are striving. God grant we may so run that we may obtain it! (1 Cor. ix. 24). Dearest brethren, no prudent farmer ever considers the sowing-season too long, because he desires that his harvest should be as abundant as possible. Now we ought to remember that all our days are numbered

as well as all the hairs of our head (Matt. x. 30), and that it is as impossible for a second of the time assigned us to be lost as it is for one of the hairs of our head to perish (Luke xxi. 18). Therefore, most dearly beloved, with so grand a promise to support us, let us never lose heart or grow weary with well-doing. Let us never complain that the burden of Christ is too heavy which He pronounces light, or that that yoke is bitter which He describes as sweet (Matt. xi. 30); but as often as we find ourselves "bearing the burden of the day and the heats" (Matt. xx. 12) let us rather think on the "eternal weight of glory" which is to be the recompense of our toil. To which recompense may we all attain through the loving compassion of Him who is the Lord of Virtues and the King of Glory (Ps. xxiii. 10), and to the Same let us meanwhile sing with the Psalmist, "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Thy name give glory" (Ps. cxiii. 9, juxta Heb.).

ON OBEDIENCE, PATIENCE, AND WISDOM.

"My heart is ready, O Lord, my heart is ready."—Ps. lvi. 8.

I implore of you, dearest brethren, in the name of that reward to which we all aspire, to embrace with ardour the opportunity now offered of working out your salvation. I implore of you in the name of that mercy, to conciliate which you have made yourselves so miserable, to accomplish the work for which you have come hither, for which you have come up from the rivers of Babylon. "Over (*super*) the rivers of Babylon," sings the Psalmist, "we sat and wept when we remembered Sion" (Ps. cxxxvi. 1). Here you have none of the cares and solicitudes which belong to family life in the world: you have no need to concern yourselves about buying and selling or other purely secular interests, not even about food and clothing. You have been delivered in great measure from the malice of the day (Matt. vi. 34), and the responsibilities of life. So hath the Lord hidden you in His own tabernacle (Ps. xxvi. 5). Wherefore, most dearly beloved, "Be still and see that He is God" (Ps. xliv. 11). But this you will never be able to do unless you first endeavour to realise what you are yourselves, so that, according to the words of the same Prophet, "the gentiles may know that they are but men" (Ps. ix. 21). To this twofold consideration, therefore, you should consecrate all your lives, often repeating the prayer of St. Augustine: "Grant that I may know Thee, my God; grant that I may

know myself." Now, does it seem to you that that man knows himself who flees at the approach of labour or pain? Or do you think *he* can be conscious that he is but a man who is not ready to submit to that for which man is born? "Man," says holy Job, "is born to labour" (Job v. 7). That he is also born to suffer let him deny who has not been born in pain. But the cries of the mother in travail bear witness to her woes, whilst the sobs and moans of the infant are clear indications of labour. Hence the Psalmist says, speaking to God, "Thou considerest labour and sorrow" (Ps. ix. 14 juxta Heb.). We endure labour in action, pain in suffering. Therefore, the Royal Prophet, knowing himself to be but a man, was ready for both, and cried out with humble submission, "My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready" (Ps. lvi. 8). And he tells us more clearly elsewhere how this double readiness is to be understood, saying, "I am ready and am not troubled, that I may keep Thy commandments" (Ps. cxviii. 60)—which belongs to action—and, "I am ready for scourges, and my sorrow is continually before me" (Ps. xxxvii. 18)—which has to do with suffering.

Let no man pretend that he is able to avoid this twofold affliction of labour and pain in this miserable life. No, not one of all the children of Adam lives here below without labour and pain. A man may indeed escape some toils or some sufferings, but beyond a doubt he shall meet with others more trying. Thus the Psalmist says of some: "They are not in the labour of men, neither shall they be scourged like other men" (Ps. lxxii. 5). Nevertheless we are not to conclude at once that they live without any

labour and have to submit to no scourging at all. For he continues, "Therefore hath pride held them fast"—no light labour, surely—"they are covered with their iniquity and their wickedness" (ibid.)—than which scourges more cruel cannot be. "There is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord" (Isaias lvii. 21). And that very insensibility which prevents them from feeling either the bitterness of labour or the stroke of the scourge only proves the excess of their misery. The son of poverty sweats at his bodily toil: but does the rich man endure a less oppressive toil inwardly in his spirit? The former opens his mouth to yawn from emptiness and fatigue, the latter to belch of his fulness: and sometimes it happens that his satiety tortures the latter more cruelly than his fasting the former. Furthermore, willingly or unwillingly, not alone mortals but the very demons as well must both do and suffer whatsoever it has pleased the sovereign providence of God to appoint.

But, my brethren, it is not the obedience of lepers that is commended to us, nor the patience of dogs. Hence we are not told to pray simply that the will of the Lord may be done, since, as is most evident, it *is* done in all and by all creatures: "for who resisteth His will?" (Rom. ix. 19); but that His will may "be done on earth as it is done in heaven." In my opinion this qualifying phrase ought to be understood as connected with the two preceding petitions also in the Lord's Prayer so that we ask our heavenly Father that His name may be hallowed and that His kingdom may come, and that both, as well as the accomplishment of His will, may be done on earth as in heaven (Matt. vi. 9, 10). For where is His name not hallowed?

Where has His kingdom not come already, since already "in the name of Jesus every knee is bowed, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth" (Phil. ii. 10)? Even the malignant one himself cried out, "I know who Thou art, the Holy One of God" (Mark i. 24). But in a far different manner and with a contrary disposition is that name hallowed in heaven, where with joy unutterable the blessed are for ever exclaiming, "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts" (Is. vi. 3). So too does He reign not only on earth but in hell also, having the empire of both life and death (Heb. ii. 14). But again He governs in one way those that serve Him unwillingly and in quite another such as render Him voluntary obedience.

Obedience, brethren, is a wholesome kind of food, for with reference to it the Lord said, "My meat is to do the will of Him That sent Me" (John iv. 34); and the Prophet, "Thou shalt eat the labours of thy hand: blessed art thou and it shall be well with thee" (Ps. cxxvii. 2). Wholesome food also is the patience of the poor which "shall not perish for ever" (Ps. ix. 19), "the bread of tears" (Ps. lxxix. 6), "the bread of sorrow" (Ps. cxxvi. 2). Nevertheless, for both kinds of food a condiment is needful, so needful that without it both will be found not only insipid to the taste but even destructive to life. Yes, dearest brethren, these two kinds of food are by themselves most unpalatable, and unless a third element is added as seasoning, undoubtedly "there is death in the pot" (4 Kings iv. 40). Now where can be found so good a condiment as wisdom? It is indeed the tree of life wherewith Moses sweetened even the waters of Mara (Exod. xv. 23–25); it is the meal used by Eliseus

to season the pottage for the sons of the prophets (4 Kings iv. 41); it is the sacred fire which it is commanded shall always burn on the altar (Lev. vi. 12); it is the oil for want of which the door was shut against the foolish virgins (Matt. xxv. 10); it is the salt which by the command of God must season every sacrifice (Lev. ii. 13): this is the reason why we call men insulse * (*insulsos*) when we wish to signify that they are wanting in wisdom. The Lord also in the same sense bids us have salt in us (Mark ix. 49), and the Apostle recommends that our conversation be seasoned with salt (Col. vi. 6).

It seems to me, however, that this very wisdom which I desire should be added as a third element to obedience and patience is itself also threefold, so that this condiment of mine may be looked upon as composed of three simples. For it is necessary that there should be justice in the intention, cheerfulness in the action, humility in the agent's conceit of himself. Insipid to God and, in a sense, nauseous is all our obedience and all our patience unless He is Himself the final cause of everything we do and suffer; because whatever we do we are commanded to do it "unto the glory of God" (1 Cor. x. 31), and it is not on condition of our suffering but of suffering "for justice' sake" that we shall be pronounced blessed (Matt. v. 10). We must, in the second place, be on our guard against pusillanimity and sadness in all we may have to do or to suffer: "for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. ix. 7); and it is manifest enough that cheerfulness

* Etymologically, 'unsalted.' The necessity of keeping as close as possible to the original will excuse the use of this obsolete word which was a favourite with Milton. Cf. *Johnson's Dictionary*.—(Translator.)

and fervour of will are particularly requisite for that twofold readiness whereof I made mention at the beginning of this discourse. In the third place and above all things it is necessary to flee from pride: for both the works and the patience of him that is high-minded are found to savour of vanity, than which there is nothing has a more disagreeable taste or one more contrary to truth.

You see now, my brethren, how profitable it is for a man to understand that he is only a man, that so he may be prepared for obedience to what is commanded and for the endurance of stripes (Ps. xxxvii. 18), and, realising the impossibility of escaping labour and pain in this mortal existence, may at least endeavour for the future to toil and suffer in such a manner as to form for himself out of these bitters a wholesome spiritual food. "For obedience is better than victims" (1 Kings xv. 22) and "the patient man is better than the valiant" (Prov. xvi. 32). Disobedience is the cause of death; if we have all to pass through that ordeal, if we must all die, it is because of the sin of disobedience. As for impatience, that is the ruin of the soul, since the Lord has said, "In your patience you shall possess your souls" (Luke xxi. 19). Wisdom also, as I have said, is necessary for salvation, because not alone they who were wanting in obedience and they who were wanting in patience lost themselves through their impatience and disobedience, but those likewise that were wanting in wisdom "perished through their folly" (Bar. iii. 28).

The purpose of my remarks so far has been that men may know that they are but men, condemned, as they now are, to toil and to suffer. There was a

period, however, when man spent his time in action and meditation, his action involving no suffering and his meditation no toil. I refer to the first stage of his earthly existence, when the Lord God took him "and put him into the paradise of pleasure to dress it and to keep it" (Gen. ii. 15). But if he persevered without falling, he was one day to be elevated thence to a still higher station where divine contemplation would be his only task: just as, on the other hand, unless he endeavours to raise himself from this lower position which he now occupies, he must ultimately fall to the nethermost depths, to live ever after in suffering alone, because in hell there is neither toil nor meditation;—nothing but suffering. Happy indeed was our first father so long as his body continued incorruptible and did not, consequently, weigh heavy on his soul (Wisdom ix. 15)! But far happier would he have been had he arrived at that more exalted state in which, being "less in action," he should more fully and more perfectly "receive wisdom" (Ecclus. xxxviii. 25), and should love the body with a gratuitous love, as having no longer any need of its services. This, my brethren, would have been the most beautiful order, and the same order we shall one day see realised. For we must in nowise despair of sometime seeing the soul endowed with such self-sufficiency that what she says to God, the body in its turn may say to her: "Thou hast no need of my goods" (Ps. xv. 2).

"Thou shalt fill me with joy with Thy countenance," so sings the Psalmist (Ps. xv. 11). Yes, O Lord, it is then we shall enjoy the fulness of bliss, then we "shall be perfectly satisfied, when Thy glory shall appear" (Ps. xvi. 15). But with regard to the reform-

ation of our bodies that we look for, and their being "made like to the Body of His lowness" (Phil. iii. 21): that, my brethren, belongs to the superabundance of the reward, it is, so to speak, the overflow of the measure (Luke vi. 38); so that the glorification of the flesh shall be to us a real, though not a principal, cause of gladness and joy. "Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine in the sides of thy house" (Ps. cxxvii. 3): that is to say, the flesh, espoused as it were to the spirit, shall be honoured indeed, but according to its measure. It shall abide not in the midst of the house but in a part more out of the way, not before our face but at our side. "Thy children as olive plants," continues the Psalmist, "round about thy table" (ibid.): that is, even good works shall not be wanting to the saints in glory, but works which are done, not in the life to come, but in this life, as it is written: "Their works follow them" (Apoc. xiv. 13). But although they rejoice and give thanks to God for the merits which His grace has enabled them to acquire, remark, nevertheless, that these good works are not given the place of honour, but are placed "round about."

But in the meantime, dwelling as we are in this world of bodies, we cannot be independent of bodies; and ever since our first parents "dissipated the law of God" (Ps. cxviii. 126) it is time not alone "for doing" (ibid.) but for suffering as well, so that labour and sorrow fill the greater part in the lives of us all (Ps. lxxxix. 10). Barley bread is hard fare, I admit: but a knight who has offended his sovereign and is in consequence banished from the court, no matter how delicate he may be, is fain to accept the hospitality of the one poor retainer he may chance to have,

to abide there in humble obscurity and to share with his host unwonted meals, exchanging for rustic messes the delicacies of the royal board and for the pallet of the poor the state-bed, according to what we read in the Prophet's lamentation: "They that were brought up in scarlet have embraced the dung" (Jer. Lam. iv. 5). In these words what Jeremias chiefly deplores is the fact that creatures of such noble nature, forgetful of their former condition, should appear so insensible to their present miserable lot that not only are they unconscious of the evils they endure, but they actually embrace the greatest of evils as the greatest of goods. Therefore it is that he says of himself, "I am the man that see my poverty by the rod of His indignation" (ibid. iii. 1).

Dearest brethren, let us groan under this heavy burden; let us lament the miseries of this present life; let each one of us break out often into cries of loving complaint to the Lord, saying with the Apostle, "Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. vii. 24). Let us also endeavour to steal ourselves from ourselves sometimes, to snatch ourselves away occasionally even for the space of an hour from these miserable earthly employments, to shoot our souls heavenwards, to lift up burning hearts to Him Who is their proper Object and in Whom they delight all the more for that He is their natural Rest. This is what the Lord Himself signifies by the invitation: "Be still and see that I am God" (Ps. xlv. 11). For there is no question here of the vision of the eyes, but of that of the heart, since He says elsewhere, "Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God" (Matt. v. 8). This is

the proper good of the heart, for the attainment of which it needs not the services of any foreign instrument. It is the proper food of the heart whereof the Psalmist says: "My heart is withered because I forgot to eat my bread" (Ps. ci. 5). When we say, according to the proverb, that nothing is easier than speech, the comparison we imply is between words and actions: for the tongue is certainly more mobile than the right arm; the former is more easily moved to words than the latter to deeds. But thought is more facile than either speech or action, since by it the soul speaks as it were, with her own mouth, sees with her own eyes, works with her own hands. Nevertheless even in her thought the soul has sometimes to "labour in her groanings" (Ps. vi. 7), yea, and sometimes to "be sorry upon her bed" (Ps. iv. 5). For "our life hath drawn so nigh to hell" (Ps. cxxxvii. 4)—the place, namely, where there is nothing but suffering—that pain encroaches upon labour, whilst both labour and pain encroach upon thought. Is it not true that our actions have all an element of suffering and that our thoughts are full of "labour and sorrow"? My soul, alas! is like the "heifer Ephraim, taught to love to tread out the corn" (Osee x. 11), accustomed to the yoke, unused to rest. Oh, "when shall I come and appear before the face of God?" (Ps. xli. 3). When shall there be an end to all these miseries, so that "death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more" (Apoc. xxi. 4), no, nor any labour? When shall my spirit be inebriated with the plenty of God's house and be made to drink of the ever-flowing torrent of His pleasure? (Ps. xxxv. 9). When shall the contemplation of that most

serene and uncreated Light absorb all the energies of my soul? My dearest children, let us "long and faint after the courts of the Lord" (Ps. lxxxiii. 3); let our sighs be often wafted thither. For there is our home: let us now at least inhale its perfume and salute it from afar. Amen

ON THE SECOND BAPTISM.

"As many of you as have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ."—Gal. iii. 27.

You know, dearest brethren,—for you are all most strongly attached to the truths of Catholic faith—that our Heavenly Father adopts as His children and transfers from the realms of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of His glory (Col. i. 13) all who renounce the devil in the sacrament of baptism. That is the "first robe" which the Father's impatient love commands the servants to "bring forth quickly" (Luke xv. 22), awaiting neither the prayer of the prodigal's lips nor even the desire of his heart, yea, anticipating the very thought of his mind "with the blessings of sweetness" (Ps. xx. 4). "For as many of us as have been baptised in Christ Jesus have put on Christ": so speaks St. Paul (Gal. iii. 27); whilst another and equally credible witness assures us that "as many as have received Him—the same Christ Jesus—He hath given them power to be made the sons of God" (John i. 12). That, my brethren, is no useless or unimportant power: it is, on the contrary, a power so marvellous that we may feel "sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. viii. 38, 39). But observe how to this long enumeration the Apostle—from whom I have been quoting—has omitted to add: "nor we

ourselves." The omission is very significant. Such is the "freedom wherewith Christ hath made us free" (Gal. iv. 31) that no creature whatever can separate us from Him or constrain us by violence to abandon His law: it is only we ourselves who have the power to forsake Him, "drawn away" by our self-will and "allured by our own concupiscence." (James i. 14). Apart from this, there is nothing else that we have cause to be afraid of. In fact, until the regenerated child is capable of the use of free will and of deliberate election, he cannot possibly be separated from the love of God. During that interval he lives in absolute security under the patronage and protection of the Lord his God and has nothing to fear from any created power. But on arriving at the age of discretion, he has to assume the responsibility of self-government. Yet not even now need he dread the violence of his external enemies, provided he guards against that domestic one which sleeps in his very bosom, I mean his own will. Doubtless, "sin shall forthwith be present at the door, but the lust thereof shall be under him" (Gen. iv. 7): only let him refuse to admit it, let him only withhold consent.

Our first parents, most dearly beloved, were not overcome by the bear or the lion; no, they were seduced by the serpent, described, mind you, not as stronger, but as "more subtle than any of the beasts of the earth which the Lord God had made" (Gen. iii. 1). Neither was it the man that led the woman astray, but the woman the man. The serpent, O Mother Eve, deceived thee (ibid. 13); yes, he deceived thee, but did not coerce thee or constrain thee. The woman, O Adam, gave thee of the forbidden fruit (ibid. 12);

she offered it for thy choice, but did not compel thee to take it. For it was thine own will and not her power that caused thee to obey her voice in preference to the Lord's. But, brethren, if our first father, through his inexperience, allowed himself to be thus led astray, let us at least, with so many examples to warn us, be always on our guard. I should rather say: since we ourselves have often been miserably seduced in the same manner, let us for the future endeavour our best to apply an efficacious remedy to such serious disorders. It is not likely that that "strong man armed" who has been overcome and fettered by a stronger, shall be able by any species of violence to recover possession of the castle once his own (Luke xi. 21–22). But he may find it empty and imprudently open to him; in which case "he goeth and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked—not more powerful—than himself, and entering in quietly—not bursting in with tumult—they dwell there" (ibid. 26) unmolested. Now to what does he owe his admission if not to self-will? This it is, therefore, that puts us again under the power of darkness and subjects us once more to the empire of death.

"Come, Lord Jesus" (Apoc. xxii. 20), O good Jesus, come to us even now and drive out again with Thine irresistible power him whom we have so foolishly readmitted: then shall we be truly free once more if only Thou wilt deliver us (John viii. 36). We "have made void the first covenant" (Lev. xxvi. 44) with Thee and have sinned against Thee, O Lord, associating ourselves again with Satan and his works, submitting our necks voluntarily to the yoke of iniquity, and renouncing our freedom for a miserable

servitude. Accordingly, dearest brethren, it behoves us to be baptised anew; we must enter into a second covenant; we have need of another profession of faith. Nor is it any longer enough to renounce the devil with all his works and pomps: we have likewise to renounce the world and our own will also; for we have been seduced by the former of these and betrayed by the latter. At our first baptism, when as yet our own will had done us no harm, it was enough to renounce the devil, through whose envy sin and death "entered this world by one man and so passed upon all men" (Rom. v. 12). But now, having had bitter experience of the world's deceitfulness and of the treachery of our wills, let us be careful not only to renew, but even to establish more securely that original covenant in what I may call—without fear that it shall be "reputed as folly in me" (Ps. xxi. 3)—the second baptism of our conversion to God *:

* In what sense the holy Preacher describes religious profession as a second baptism he fully explains in his *Treatise on Precept and Dispensation*, c. xvii.: "You ask me why the religious profession is so privileged amongst all other works of penance as to deserve to be called a second baptism. I answer: because it implies a complete renunciation of the world, because the monastic life is the most excellent of all, making its professors and lovers like unto angels, unlike to men; nay, it restores in man the image and likeness of God, inasmuch as, like baptism, it conforms us anew to Christ. For we are in some sense baptised anew when, 'mortifying our members which are upon the earth' (Col. iii. 5.), we again 'put on the Lord Jesus Christ' (Rom. xiii. 14), being a second time 'planted together in the similitude of His death' (Rom. vi. 5). And just as in baptism we are rescued from the powers of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of eternal glory: so in this second regeneration of the monastic vows we are delivered from the denser darkness of multiplied personal sins and introduced into the light of virtue, so that we can say with the Apostle: 'The night is past and the day is at hand' (Rom. xiii. 12)." Notice, he does not say that religious profession remits sin sacramentally, "ex opere operato," as baptism

let us renounce I say, not alone the devil, but the world as well, and the very affections of our own hearts.

Yes, most dearly beloved, let us strive "to keep ourselves unspotted from this world," knowing that this is "religion clean and undefiled before God and the Father" (James i. 27). Let us likewise beware of self-will, as of a most dangerous and venomous viper, which now is alone capable of destroying our souls.

does, but "ex opere operantis," dependently on the disposition and acts of the religious; for, as Suarez points out (T. xv. 438), it is not so much about the taking of vows the Saint is here discoursing as about the observance of them.—(Translator.)

ON THE DIFFERENT STAGES IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

"With the holy Thou wilt be holy, and with the innocent man Thou wilt be innocent, and with the elect Thou wilt be elect, and with the perverse Thou wilt be perverted."—Ps. xvii. 26,27.

The variety of names under which we are accustomed to speak of God, calling Him at one time Father, at another Master, and Lord at another—this variety of appellatives, my brethren, is not intended to imply any corresponding variety in His most simple and absolutely immutable Essence, but only the manifold diversities of our own dispositions, according to the different degrees of virtue to which our souls have attained. For there are some souls that seem to be living as hirelings under the eyes of the Head of the household, others as slaves under the eyes of their Lord, others as disciples under the eyes of their Master, still others as children under the eyes of their Father, and not a few as brides in the presence of their Bridegroom. The result of this is that God Himself appears to grow in degrees of amiability in proportion as we grow in love, and to change in character with His changing creatures: He Who, as the Psalmist sings, shall change the works of His hand and they shall be changed, whilst He is always the self-same and His years shall not fail (Ps. ci. 26–28). And hear how the same Prophet addresses the Lord in another psalm: "With the holy," he says, "Thou wilt be holy, and with the innocent man Thou wilt be innocent, and with the elect Thou

wilt be elect" (Ps. xvii. 26,27). But still more astonishing are the words which follow: "And with the perverse, Thou wilt be perverted." And that we may understand in what sense such changes are found in God, or rather how He Who is unchanging and unchangeable in Himself produces such changes in His creatures, it is immediately added: "For Thou wilt save the humble people, but wilt bring down the eyes of the proud" (ibid. 28).

The Apostle assures us, brethren, that "that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is animal, afterwards that which is spiritual" (1 Cor. xv. 46): and so it seems to me that I can distinguish four different states in the period of our life antecedent to our conversion, in the first of which we were subject to ourselves, in the rest to "the prince of this world" (John xiv. 30). The soul can be said to be subject to herself when she follows her own will, in the enjoyment of a dangerous liberty. We have the type of a soul in this state in the Prodigal Son, who demanded and obtained the portion of the patrimony that was due to him (Luke xv). That is to say, the soul received her faculties of intellect and memory, the various bodily powers, and all other such goods of the natural order, and began to use them, not according to the divine, but solely for the satisfaction of her own will, living, as it were, "without God in this world" (Ephes. ii 12). Therefore, so long as a man thus follows the guidance of his own fancy, he is subject to himself; he is not as yet become the slave of vices and sins. But "whosoever committeth sin is the servant—no longer of himself, but—of sin" (John viii. 34). Now he has gone "abroad into a far country," who

hitherto had been separated indeed, but not far removed from his Father. By receiving the portion of substance that fell to him, he was made his own master; and although he quitted his Father's house he was still a near neighbour, so long as he abstained from positive sin, that is to say, so long as he was content to follow his own will in things not expedient indeed, but yet lawful (1 Cor. vi. 12). But when he withdrew even from himself, that is, by lapsing into sin, then in truth he went abroad into a far country. For nothing can be farther from Him Who singularly and sovereignly *is* than that which is in nowise; nothing can be more widely removed from Him "of Whom and by Whom and in Whom are all things" (Rom. xi. 36) than sin which is nothing at all.*

Now it is a most righteous disposition of divine justice that the son who thus abandons his Father shall become the thrall of a stranger. Hence we read of our Prodigal how, having gone "abroad into a far country," he "cleaved to one of the citizens of that country": by which, as I think, we are to understand that he fell into the power of one of the malignant spirits, who, forasmuch as they sin with unchangeable obstinacy, as if with them "malice and wickedness" (1 Cor. v. 8) had "passed into an affection of the heart" (Ps. lxxii. 7), "are no more strangers and foreigners but are citizens (so to speak) and domestics"

* That is to say, sin taken formally is nothing positive but the want of due relation between the deliberate act of a free creature and the nature of that creature and ultimately with the nature of God. "Every sin," says St. Thomas (II. II. q. 18, a. 60), "in so far as it is evil, consists in the corruption or privation of some good"; "Every sin consists formally in a turning away from God" (ibid. q. 10, a. 3). A few theologians, however, maintain that sin or moral evil is in its essence something positive. Cf. Billuart, *Curs. Theol.* t. 1., pp. 284-297

of sin (Ephes. ii. 19). And in what sense can he who was so young, so poor, and an utter stranger in the land, be supposed to have "cleaved to one of the citizens" if not by becoming his slave? But in truth the words which follow leave no room for doubt as to the character of this alliance. For so we read: "And he went and cleaved to one of the citizens of that country. And he sent him into his farm to feed swine." And take notice, brethren, that it was through pressure of hunger he is said to have joined himself to this cruel citizen, just as we are told it was in the time of famine that Israel went down into Egypt (Gen. xlii.). Surely, that must be a dangerous and pernicious kind of hunger which thus reduces freemen to miserable servitude, subjects them to "hard works in clay and brick" (Exod. i. 14), makes them the associates, yea, rather the servants of swine. But wherefore such dire want in the case of one who had come from a home so wealthy, having gathered together all the goods that constituted his portion of the patrimony? We have the explanation, doubtless, in the words premised, which inform us that he "wasted his substance living riotously" with sinful associates, and therefore "he began to be in want."

These sinful associates we must take to be carnal desires, by indulging which without restraint he squandered the goods of nature, making a perverted use of them all to minister to his pleasures. Hence, as already remarked, ruinous want succeeded, because, as the Wise Man bears witness, "the eye is not filled with seeing, neither is the ear filled with hearing" (Eccles. i. 8). He is sent therefore to feed swine, that is, he is abandoned to the gratification of his bodily senses

which love the slough and delight in all uncleanness. And consider, my brethren, if perchance these be not the swine into which the evil spirits are wont to enter when cast out from men (Matt. viii. 31). For after sin has been expelled from our spiritual part, I mean from our mind, it continues to live in our corporeal organs. Hence the Apostle testifies that with his mind he consented to the law of God, and with his flesh to the law of sin which dwells in our members (Rom. vii. 22,23). And it is in the same sense he says in another passage, "I know that there dwelleth not in me, that is to say, in my flesh, that which is good" (ibid. 18). But what is to be done when the impure spirits, thus driven forth from their dwelling in man, take refuge in the swine? What else but to have recourse to the remedy of tears, to run to the briny waters of contrition and to suffocate with their abundance the accursed vitality of the root of sin? Nevertheless such an absolute destruction of sin appears to be reserved for the end of life.

In making these remarks, my brethren, I may have seemed to wander outside the limits of my subject. However, my purpose was that I might be in a position to explain more clearly in what manner the evil spirit establishes his power over him whom he finds to be his own master, as "a strong man armed" entering and occupying the court the owner whereof is poor and weak (Luke xi. 21). Now it seems to me that men are held under the power of the prince of darkness in three ways: firstly, before they are able either to consent or to dissent—which is the case with such as have not yet attained the use of reason, but are nevertheless "vessels of wrath" (Rom. ix. 22)

on account of original sin, until "the strong man" has been bound and his spoils taken from him by One stronger than he (Mark iii. 27), Who cometh in the sacrament of baptism; the true Moses Who cometh "by water, yet not by water only but by water and blood" (Exod. ii, 1 John v. 6); secondly, by their own deliberate choice, when they sin voluntarily; thirdly, even against their will, when they would now be glad to escape but are miserably bound by their sinful habits, God by a just judgment so permitting that they that are filthy should become filthier still (Apoc. xxii. 11). Into this third state seems to have fallen the Prodigal Son of the Gospel. And in truth exceedingly prodigal was he who not alone squandered his substance, but even reduced himself to a most miserable bondage, overwhelmed with unhappiness, "sold under sin" (Rom. vii. 14). Hence "on returning to himself he said: How many hired servants in my Father's house abound with bread, and I here perish with hunger!" (Luke xv. 17). If anyone amongst us has had the like experience, he will readily, I doubt not, recognise in these words a true description of the then sad state of his soul. Where indeed is the man fettered with habits of sin, who would not consider himself happy if it were only given him to be even like one of those lukewarm Christians whom he beholds in the world, living without the guilt of any great crimes, yet not "seeking the things that are above," as the Apostle counsels, but rather "the things that are upon the earth" (Col. iii. 1,2)? "How many hired servants," he exclaims, "in my Father's house abound with bread!" That is to say, they are consoled in their innocency and enjoy the peace of a

good conscience; whilst "I here perish with hunger," that is, I am tormented with sinful and insatiable desires and vicious affections. It is also possible to take these words in such a sense that the Prodigal shall be understood to say he is perishing, not from "a famine of bread or a thirst of water," but from the famine and thirst "of the word of the Lord" wherewith Judaea was threatened by the Prophet Amos (Amos viii. 11). With regard to what I have just been saying of tepid worldlings, I have spoken not according to the facts of the case, but according to the sentiments of the abandoned sinner. For it is not true that they who think but of earth and who serve as hirelings really rejoice in the testimony of a good conscience. But the contrite sinner is apt to regard as a perfect saint whomsoever he beholds innocent of the crimes he has committed himself. And so he says, "make me as one of Thy hired servants" (Luke xv. 19).

We have now come to the state in which men begin to be in some sense subject to God, that wherein they live as hirelings under the eyes of the Head of the household. Such are those whom we see in the world, with little or no desire for eternal goods, serving God for a wage, so to speak, and asking of Him temporal blessings, for which alone they have any regard. In the second state of subjection to God, one begins to live under the eyes of his Lord, in such sort that, like a slave, he dreads the dungeon and fears to be put to the torture. It is in this state our conversion begins, here we make our exit from the world and enter upon the ways of life. Hence the words of the Wise Man, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"

(Prov. i. 7). And in another Prophet we find, "Through Thy fear, O Lord, we have conceived and have brought forth the spirit of salvation" (Is. xxvi. 18, juxta LXX). Very close to this state and in a manner mixed with it is the third, that of those who, as being yet "little ones in Christ" (1 Cor. iii. 1), long for the milk of babes (1 Peter ii. 2) and live as it were under the eyes of their Master and Tutor. This is particularly the state peculiar to novices. For whenever these begin to take delight in the comforts of holy meditation, of contrite tears, of the psalmody and other spiritual exercises, they become filled with a childish fear lest they should offend their Master, lest they should deserve to be flogged, so to speak, and to be deprived of the little presents wherewith their most loving-kind Instructor is wont to attract them to Himself. These are they that "set the Lord always in their sight" (Ps. xv. 8) and become troubled if He should happen to withdraw from them His presence even for the space of an hour. They no longer, like slaves, dread the vengeance of their Lord, but as little ones they fear the rod of correction, and so they embrace discipline—the discipline of their Master—lest at any time He should be angry and they perish from the just way (Ps. ii. 12), that is, lest they lose the grace of devotion and with it all taste for spiritual things, being oppressed with a kind of languour and whipped, as it were, in their souls by the bitterness of their thoughts and feelings. For these are the scourges wherewith God chastises His little ones, and we learn to distinguish them more easily by our experience than by the accounts we get from others. Hence the Lord Himself declares by His Prophet, "And if the

children forsake My law and walk not in My judgments, if they profane My justices and keep not My commandments: I will visit their iniquities with a rod and their sins with stripes" (Ps. lxxxviii. 31–33).

Accordingly, my brethren, in these first stages of the spiritual life which constitute what I may call our spiritual childhood, the fear of the Lord and the fear of the Master succeed each other in such a way that he who is careful to keep a close watch on his interior dispositions shall find himself one moment in the first fear and the next in the second. Hence it is that the Saviour Himself, addressing the Church whilst still in her infancy, claimed as His own both these titles at once, saying, "You call Me Master and Lord, and you say well, for so I am" (John xiii. 13). Let our novices recognise here their own place, so that they may be more solicitous for the future to preserve themselves in these dispositions. For necessary to them above all things is holy fear, whereby they can blot out the sins of the past and guard against future falls. "The fear of the Lord," says the Wise Man, "driveth out sin" (Ecclus. i. 27): as well the sin which has already gained admission as that which is striving to enter. The former it driveth out by leading us to the practice of penance, the latter by inspiring us with the courage to resist. But forasmuch as "the way that leadeth to life" is strait and rugged (Matt. vii. 14), you have need, dearest children, as being yet "little ones in Christ," of an instructor and of a nurse who shall teach you, guide you, foster you, play with you, as it were, and console you with his caresses. Wherefore, not I, but the Prince and Chief Pastor of the Church admonishes you with the words:

"As new born babes, desire the rational milk, without guile" (1 Peter ii. 2). Not that he would have you to be always satisfied with such nourishment, but that you may be built up by it unto salvation. This thought has been more clearly expressed by another inspired author, who says, "Rejoice for joy with her all you that mourn for her (that is for Jerusalem, whereof the Prophet has been speaking): that you may suck and be filled with the breasts of her consolations, that when you are weaned you may feast on the beginnings of her glory" (Is. lxvi. 10,11, juxta LXX).

This, my brethren, is the state of the grown up son who lives under the authority of his Father, and is no longer fed with milk but nourished with solid food, "forgetting the things that are behind" (Phil. iii. 13) where "his eye abode in bitterness" (Job xvii. 2), and not even regarding present things nor seeking the childish consolations of children, but "stretching himself forth to those that are before, he presseth towards the mark, to the prize of the supernal vocation" (Phil. iii. 13,14), to the gate of the future beatitude, "looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Tit. ii. 13). For he has now "put away the things of a child" (1 Cor. xiii. 11); neither is he any longer unduly attached to transitory consolations, however sweet. But inasmuch as he has at length attained to the stature of a perfect man (Ephes. iv. 13), it behoveth him to be employed about his Father's business (Luke ii. 49), to long for the inheritance, and to occupy his thoughts about it in assiduous meditation. Nor need *he* have any fear of being reputed a mercenary who thus sighs after

his share of the patrimony, who looks for it and longs for it with all the affection of his soul, because it is meant to be the reward, not of the hireling but of the son, according to the words of the Prophet, who says: "When He shall give sleep to His beloved, behold the inheritance of the Lord is the reward of the son, the fruit of the womb" (Ps. cxxvi. 2,3).*

Nevertheless, there is a state still more sublime and a disposition far nobler than this. It is that of him who, having perfectly purified his heart, desires nothing and seeks nothing of God but God Himself.† Taught by frequent experience how good the Lord is to them that hope in Him, to the soul that seeketh Him (Jer. Lam. iii. 25), he now cries out with all fervour and sincerity in the words of the Psalmist: "What have I in heaven? and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth? For Thee my flesh and my heart hath fainted away. Thou art the God of my heart and the God that is my portion for ever" (Ps. lxxii. 25,26). For the soul that is such desires nothing for herself with a private affection, neither happiness nor glory nor anything else whatever, but loses herself completely in God, and has but one most eager desire, namely, that the King would bring her into His bed-chamber, that she might belong to Him alone

* "Cum dederit dilectis suis somnum, ecce hereditas Domini, filii merces, fructus ventris." As thus punctuated, the text admits of St. Bernard's interpretation. But the second comma is usually placed after the word "filii" and so we have the Douay rendering: "When He shall give sleep to His beloved, behold the inheritance of the Lord are children, the reward the fruit of the womb." That this latter is the true reading is evident from the Greek, which has: "*ὅταν δῷ τοῖς ἀγαπητοῖς αὐτοῦ ὕπνον, ἰδοὺ ἡ κληρονομία Κυρίου υἱοί, ὁ μισθὸς τοῦ καρποῦ τῆς γαστρός.*"—(Translator.)

† Cf. note at page 267, Vol. I., of this series.

and enjoy His sweet caresses.* Hence always "beholding with open face"—so far as this is possible to her—the glory of her heavenly Bridegroom, she is "transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. iii. 18). And surely after this she deserves to have it said to her, "Thou art all fair, O My love, and there is not a spot in thee" (Cant. iv. 7); whilst she on her side may presume to say, "My Beloved to me and I to Him Who feedeth among the lilies" (Cant. ii. 16). Such, my brethren, is the most sweet and happy converse which a soul in these dispositions is privileged and delighted to hold with her heavenly Bridegroom.

* It may not be superfluous to note that what is said here has no connection with the condemned doctrines of Quietism. For St. Bernard does not, like Madame Guyon and her illustrious disciple, Fénelon, exclude altogether the desire of happiness and heavenly glory, but only the desire of these "from private affection": the soul, he says in effect, that is truly perfect in charity, longs after heaven and happiness, but rather for God's sake than for her own.—(Translator.)

ON WHAT KIND OF GLORYING IS FORBIDDEN AND WHAT APPROVED.

"*He that glorieth let him glory in the Lord.*"—1 Cor. i. 31.

"He that glorieth let him glory in the Lord." The Apostle, dearest brethren, was not ignorant that glory belongs not to the creature but to the Creator, according to what is written in Isaias, "I the Lord: this is My Name: I will not give My glory to another" (Is. xlii. 8), and in the Gospel, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good-will" (Luke ii. 14), and in the psalms, "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Thy name give glory" (Ps. cxiii. 8). But neither was he ignorant that the rational creature, as being made to His Maker's image, has such an overmastering desire for glory that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to restrain him from pursuing it. Wherefore, "according to the wisdom given him by God" (2 Peter iii. 15) he devised a most salutary expedient which he has proposed to us in the words: "Since we cannot be dissuaded from glorying, at least let him that glorieth glory in the Lord." And consider, my brethren, how far the philosophy of St. Paul surpasses the philosophy of the wise of this world which "is foolishness with God" (1 Cor. iii. 19). For when these philosophers saw some of their neighbours taking delight in human applause and "receiving glory one from another" (John v. 44), the more eminent amongst them had the good sense to realise that such glory was vain and entirely contemptible. But examin-

ing further and more diligently inquiring what is the glory which a wise man ought to pursue, at this point " they became vain in their thoughts and their foolish heart was darkened " (Rom. i. 21) : because they considered that his own self-esteem was glory enough for any man. As if, forsooth, the soul which does not exist of herself can be happy of herself ! Accordingly, whilst they who were anxious for the praise of others used to devote themselves with all solicitude to such undertakings as called forth the wonder and admiration of men, our philosophers deemed nothing worthy to be desired save those things which conscience, the interior judge, could sanction.*

Such, brethren, is the philosophy of the wise of this world at its best. And although it comes nigher to the truth than the vanity that seeks glory from the mouths of others, it is nevertheless far from perfect. The Apostle, therefore, rising in the lofty contemplation of truth above both the glory of self-approval and that which is borrowed, exclaims, " He that glorieth, let him glory, not in another, not in himself, but only in the Lord." And that glory which appeared to approximate more to the truth, he for this very reason reproved with particular severity and condemned with the infallible judgment of truth, saying, " Not he who commendeth himself is approved but he whom God commendeth " (2 Cor. x. 18). Wherefore, then, should I be solicitous about other men's judgment or my own, by which I shall neither stand condemned if it be unfavourable, nor if favourable approved ?

* " Mea mihi conscientia pluris est quam omnium sermo." —Cicero, epist. VI. ad Atticum. " Populus me sibilat at mihi plaudo ipse domi "—Horace, Sat. I. I. 66–7. " Beatus qui plenus est bona conscientia."—Seneca, de Vit. Beat. xix.

My brethren, if I were under the necessity of appearing before your tribunal, I should have reason to rejoice at being commended by you. And if my destiny were to be decided by the judgment of my own conscience, I could reasonably rest satisfied with its testimony in my favour, and glory in the sense of self-approval. As the case is, however, since I must present myself not at your nor at my own, but at the judgment-seat of God, what folly or rather what madness would it not be to rejoice in my own or in your approbation! Especially as the Judge is One to Whose eyes "all things are naked and open" (Heb. iv. 13) and Who "needeth not that any one should give Him testimony of man" (John ii. 25). Not without reason, therefore, does the Apostle condemn all vain and delusive glory. "To me," he says, "it is a very small thing to be judged by you or by man's day; but neither do I judge my own self. For I am not conscious to myself of anything, yet am I not hereby justified: but He That judgeth me is the Lord" (1 Cor. iv. 3,4). Hereupon observe particularly that whilst he esteemed the judgment of others as nothing worth and refuses to follow even his own, he does not nevertheless look upon the latter as valueless, like the former. "For what man knoweth the things of a man but the spirit of a man that is in him?" (1 Cor. ii. 11). Hence, as compared with the interior testimony of conscience, the external witness of others has no value. For why should I attach any importance to the praises of people to whom I am altogether unknown? Now if "the spirit of a man that is in him" could know all that is in man, doubtless its testimony would be sufficient. But "the heart of man is perverse above

all things, and unsearchable" (Jer. xvii. 9) even to itself, so much so that it is in great measure ignorant of its present dispositions and can know nothing at all of its future. Nevertheless, inasmuch as it may know something of its present state, "if our hearts do not reprehend us we have confidence towards God" (1 John iii. 21), as says the blessed John Evangelist—confidence, observe, not glory. But when we shall deserve to receive a favourable sentence on ourselves from that Judge Who is Truth Itself and from Whose sight nothing can be concealed, then indeed we may glory with all security.

In the meantime the Apostle cries out to us, saying, "Judge not before the time, until the Lord come Who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts" (1 Cor. iv. 5). It is then our glorying shall be equally secure and perfect, for "then shall every man have praise from God" (ibid.). But even now also we may glory in the Lord, not fully, however, but in some degree, and not without much fear and solicitude, when "the Holy Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 16). For in truth it is a reasonable cause for glorying, the fact that we have so great a Father, that so unspeakable a Majesty hath care for us (1 Peter v. 7). This is what made the Prophet ask in wonder: "What is man, O Lord, that Thou shouldst magnify him? Or why dost Thou set Thy heart upon him?" (Job vii. 17). Consequently, "let him that glorieth glory in the Lord," and not in his own merits. For "what hath he that he hath not received? and if he hath received, why doth he glory as if he hath not

received it ? " (1 Cor. iv. 7). Let him glory, therefore, in Him from Whom he hath received, not as if he himself were anything great, but because the Lord hath magnified him. That is to say, let him glory in the graces he hath received, but as one that hath received, not as one that hath not. For the Apostle does not say, " If thou hast received why dost thou glory ? " ; but " why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received ? " Hence, he does not forbid our glorying, but only points out to us the way in which we ought to glory.

But, my brethren, how are we to understand these other words of his : " Not he who commendeth himself is approved, but he whom God commendeth ? " For whom, I ask, has God ever commended in this life ? How indeed can Truth commend one that is still found worthy of blame ? Moreover, the Lord Himself says, " Such as I love I rebuke and chastise " (Apoc. iii. 19). And does the divine commendation of us wholly consist in this ? Yes, wholly : to my mind, at least. And what better commendation ought we to desire than the proof of God's love for us ? Now we can have no stronger, no more certain evidence of this love in the present life than that which the Prophet speaks of in the words : " The just man shall correct me in mercy and shall reprove me " (Ps. cxl. 5). For this reproof, whereby the Spirit of truth is constantly, although secretly, reminding us of our shortcomings, banishes from our breasts the vices of pride, sloth, and ingratitude. These, my brethren, are three vices with which nearly all religious folk are dangerously infected, because the ear of their heart is not kept sufficiently attentive to catch the interior whispers

of the same Spirit of truth Who flatters no man. And in the case of many (unless I am deceived) this insensibility to divine inspirations is due to the fact that, being intent on seeking their own glory, they can never enjoy any repose, although they can discover nothing at all in themselves which could be considered a motive for glorying in any degree whatever.

For ourselves, dearest brethren, our glory shall be both secure and perfect, if, like holy Job, we now fear all our works (Job ix. 28), and if with the Prophet Isaias we acknowledge that all our justices are only as a filthy rag to the eyes of God (Is. lxiv. 6). Nevertheless we still confide and even glory in the Lord, Whose exceeding mercy in our regard, while preserving us altogether from the more grievous faults and from the sins that are unto death (1 John v. 16), so kindly condescends to reveal to us our lesser faults of frailty and the manifold imperfections in our life, and to pardon them when acknowledged; so that being firmly grounded in humility, prudence and gratitude, we may no longer think of glorying in ourselves but in Him.

ON THE SEVEN STEPS IN THE WAY OF CONFESSION

" Show me Thy ways, O Lord, and teach me Thy paths."—Ps. xiv. 4 ; *for " Thy ways are beautiful ways and all Thy paths are peaceful.*—Prov. iii. 17."

" Thou hast made known to me the ways of life ; Thou shalt fill me with joy with Thy countenance ; at Thy right hand are delights even to the end " (Ps. xv. 11). To Thee, Lord Jesus, we gladly come, as disciples to their Master, as patients to their Physician, as servants to their Lord. Yea, for Thou art in truth our Lord and our Master, Whose school is here on earth although Thy seat is in the heavens. Thou art that incomparable Physician Who with a single word canst cure all our ailments. " Show me Thy ways, O Lord, and teach me Thy paths," for " Thy ways are beautiful ways and all Thy paths are peaceful." Blessed are they that walk in Thy ways, O Lord God of virtues (Ps. cxxvii 1, lviii. 6) ; but more blessed they that " run the way of Thy commandments (Ps. cxviii. 32), that run after Thee to the odour of Thine ointments " (Cant. i. 3). For Thou " exultest as a giant to run Thy course " (Ps. xviii. 6), and not only dost Thou run, but Thou " leapest upon the mountains and skippest over the hills " (Cant. ii. 8). The pagan philosophers likewise exulted as giants, not however to run Thy way, but rather to run after vainglory, " becoming vain in their thoughts " (Rom. i. 21), losing themselves,

not in humility or in Thy virtues, but in their own; for "the way of wisdom they have not known, neither have they remembered her paths" (Bar. iii. 23): "she hath not been heard of in the land of Chanaan, neither hath she been seen in Theman" (ibid. 22). Accursed be they that said to the Lord Jesus, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways" (Job xxi. 14). As for us, we seek Thee, Lord, from day to day, and we long after the knowledge of Thy paths (Is. lviii. 2).

Thy principal ways are two in number, confession, namely, and obedience. In confession the soul is cleansed from her stains, and in obedience she is established in virtue. A most wonderful spiritual laver is confession, which purifies the sinner and enhances the purity of the just. If the soul comes burdened with sins, they are all washed away; if she comes adorned with virtues and good works, confession increases their value. When you confess your faults, as "a sacrifice to the Lord is your afflicted spirit" (Ps. l. 19); when you confess with thanksgiving the benefits of God, you "offer to Him the sacrifice of praise" (Ps. xlix. 14). Where there is no confession the just man is reputed ungrateful and the sinner counted as dead. Therefore, confession is the life of the sinner and the glory of the just. I hear King David thuswise confessing: "I have sinned against the Lord," and I hear the Prophet answering at once, "The Lord also hath taken away thy sin, thou shalt not die" (2 Kings xii. 13) I behold Mary Magdalen, if not with words, at least by her actions, publicly confessing her crimes, and I hear the Lord making answer for her, "Many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved much" (Luke vii. 47).

I think of Peter, the prince of the apostles, denying his Master like a coward, then going out and weeping bitterly, and the Lord in mercy turning to look upon him (Luke xxii. 61). I contemplate that happy robber accusing himself and excusing Christ, and receiving the Saviour's promise, " This day thou shalt be with Me in paradise " (Luke xxiii. 43). Oh, what a sublime confession that was, by which a condemned and crucified brigand merited to mount from the gibbet of shame to the kingdom of glory, from earth to heaven, from the cross to paradise ! Glorious, too, was that confession which delivered the Apostle Peter from the crime of his triple denial and did not suffer him to fall from his dignity as head of the apostolic band. And the confession through which many sins were forgiven the Magdalen because she loved much, through which, invested with the title of great charity, she deserved to be numbered with the disciples of the Lord—how precious it was ! Great again was that mercy which, after his humble confession, cleansed the Royal Prophet from his manifold defilement and restored him to his former glory and grace. This way of confession, therefore, is one that has never yet deceived those who elected to walk in it, nor has it ever been wanting to any but to such as were wanting to it.

The way of confession, my brethren, comprises in itself numerous subordinate ways, and its paths will appear manifold to him who would discover them, difficult to him who would walk in them, inexplicable to him who would set them forth in order. The first path and the first step in this way is undoubtedly self-knowledge. From heaven has come the familiar

saying: "Know thyself, O mortal."* And see if the Divine Bridegroom in the Canticle of love does not speak to the same effect when He says to His Bride, "If thou knowest not thyself, O fairest among women, go forth and follow after the flocks" (Cant. i. 7). Now, self-knowledge embraces three things: that a man be aware of what he has done, of what he has deserved, and of what he has lost. O noblest of earthly creatures, image of God, living likeness of thy Creator, what conduct could be baser than to defile thine own flesh with carnal gratifications, and for the sake of a momentary satisfaction to lose a torrent of eternal joys? (Ps. xxxv. 9). What madness could be worse than to be carried away with anger, to be lifted up with pride, to be disquieted with envy, to be tormented with worry? Why wouldst thou that hast been brought up in scarlet, thus embrace the dung? (Jer. Lam. iv. 5). Remember also what thou hast merited. Recall to mind the bottomless pit of hell, the brazen furnace of the infernal Babylon, the house of death, the dwelling of woe, the hollow globe of flames, the biting cold, the eternal darkness. Consider the variety of the torments, the frightful appearance of the torturers, the endless succession of the pains, the infinitude of the miseries. Contemplate all these horrors with thine interior eye and thou shalt feel disposed to say: "It were better for me if I had not been born." Recall thy gaze now from this picture and bend it on what thou hast lost. Think of that glorious city of God, that heavenly habitation, that

* "γνῶθι σεαυτὸν" This precept, which according to Socrates sums up all human wisdom, has been attributed to the goddess Phemonoe, daughter of Apollo, for which reason it was inscribed over the portico of Apollo's temple at Delphi.—(Translator.)

home of immortal life, that palace of pleasure, that splendour of glory, that ocean of love, that infinite charity. Reflect on the various degrees of gladness and on the beauty of the blessed, on the variety of their rewards, on the multitude of their delights ; and thou shalt feel constrained to cry out, " Whoso loseth Thee, O Lord my God, hath indeed lost everything." My brethren, bind your souls with this " triple cord " (Eccles. iv. 12) and you shall understand and discern that the beginning of salvation is the knowledge of sin.

The second step in the way of confession is penitence. It is closely connected with the first ; for to know oneself it is necessary to be penitent, and to be penitent it is necessary to know oneself. Be penitent, therefore, O my soul, wounded with the dart of compunction. Repent thee of losing thine innocence, of neglecting to recover it, of abusing the patience of God. I know, Lord Jesus, that Thou didst restore to us " the first robe " of innocence (Luke xv. 22) in baptism ; but scarcely had we been attired in that snowy garment and re-established in the seat of justice, when we turned aside from the way which Thou didst show us and with the Prodigal Son squandered " the portion of substance that fell to us " in the far country of aversion from Thee (ibid. 12-13). There came to us the spirits of wickedness, the princes of the place of everlasting fire, the foul to the cleansed, the damned to the predestinate, the perverse to the righteous, and they said to our souls, " Bend yourselves down that we may pass over you " (Is. li. 23). We hearkened to them, we bent ourselves down, they passed over us, and so we again lost our innocence. But if it be a crime and a great crime to have lost that precious

endowment, how shall we characterise the conduct of such as make no attempt to recover it? Let a man lose something of his temporal possessions; he will at once appeal for justice, he will implore the aid of his friends, he will institute legal proceedings: in a word, he will leave no means untried to recover his property, nor will he desist from his efforts until he has found what is lost or got back what he has been deprived of; and how carefully he will guard it once it has been restored! Now we have lost "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that cannot fade, reserved for us in heaven" (1 Peter i. 4), lost it through the craft of Satan, that insatiable homicide (John viii. 44); and shall we take no steps to recover it? He has brought us down to earth, and shall we make no endeavour to rise again? God forbid! Let us rather rise up at once and go to our Father and say to Him, "Father, we have sinned against heaven and before Thee" (Luke xv. 21). And accomplishing all that is written in the text of the Gospel narrative, let us offer our Father penitence of soul and compunction of heart, if perchance He will see us whilst we are yet a great way off, and being moved with compassion will hasten to meet us, falling upon our neck and kissing us "with the kiss of His mouth" (Cant. i. 1). Perchance—who knows?—He will order His servants to bring forth the first robe of our innocence and to reclothe us in the garments of virtue and to put a ring of divine secrets on our hand and to see that our "feet be shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace" (Ephes. vi. 15). Possibly, too, He will have the fatted calf brought in and slain for the entertainment of His children returned from afar, and give

command for universal feasting and exultation and that they be introduced with music and dancing to the everlasting delights of the heavenly Jerusalem, where "there shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance" (Luke xv. 10-24). We know, Lord Jesus, that Thou "will not deprive of good things them that walk in innocence" (Ps. lxxxiii. 13), yea, nor even them that walk in penitence. For in truth we all have sinned save One alone: but "blessed is the man to whom the Lord hath not imputed sin" (Ps. xxxi. 2), because whatsoever He decides not to impute is as if it had never been.

Consider also, my brother, with what arrogance thou didst exercise or rather abuse the patience of God. His gaze was fixed upon thee the while thou wast transgressing His laws, but He dissembled as if He had no eyes to see. He called to thee and thou wouldst not hearken; He threatened and thou feltest no fear; He tried to win thee with promises and thou didst remain indifferent: thou couldst neither be drawn from sin by the hope of heaven nor frightened therefrom by the terrors of hell. "Knowest thou not that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance?" (Rom. ii. 4). Oh, fear with an exceeding great fear lest "thou treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the just judgment of God" (ibid. 5), and remember that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God" (Heb. x. 31). Therefore, bind up the wound of thy soul with this threefold cataplasm of salutary penitence, and say, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak; heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled, and my soul is troubled exceedingly: but Thou, O Lord, how long?

Turn to me, O Lord and deliver my soul : oh, save me for Thy mercy's sake " (Ps. vi. 3-5).

The third step in the way of confession is sorrow. This also, like the preceding, is made up of three different elements. For truly after attaining to self-knowledge and penitence " my sorrow was renewed, my heart grew hot within me, and in my meditation a fire flamed forth " (Ps. xxxviii. 3,4), because I had offended my Creator, because I had felt no fear of disobeying my Lord, because I had despised my Benefactor. " Behold, as clay is in the hand of the potter, so art thou in My hand, saith the Lord " (Jer. xviii. 6). If, then, He has made thee " a vessel unto honour," wherefore hast thou presumed to make thyself a vessel " unto dishonour " (Rom. ix. 21) ? Has the creature dared to provoke the Creator, the work of clay the Potter, the fashioned being the Being Who fashioned it ? Remember, O thou vilest of clay, that if thou fallest upon this Stone thou shalt be broken, but if It falleth upon thee it shall grind thee to powder (Matt. xxi. 44), yea, grind thee with such a grinding that nothing at all shall be left of thee. Yet thou hast added crime to crime, offending thy Creator and despising thy Lord. Thou wast a servant of that Lord Whose anger none can resist, and in the prescriptions of the law He had intimated His will to thee. Nevertheless, " thou wouldst not understand that thou mightest do well " (Ps. xxxv. 4), but rebelling against thy Sovereign's authority thou didst resolve to live within His realms subject to no other law than thine own sweet will. Hast thou not heard the sentence pronounced upon that wicked servant who, knowing the will of his Master, " did not ac-

cording to His will," how that "he shall be beaten with many stripes" (Luke xii. 47)? What? All the holy angels stand ready "to execute His word, hearkening to the voice of His orders" (Ps. cii. 20); He summons the stars of the firmament "and they say: here we are" (Bar. iii. 35); the winds and the sea are obedient to His behests (Matt. viii. 27); and all creatures follow with unswerving fidelity the course which His will has appointed them; thou alone would step aside, thou alone wouldst contemn the decrees of His Sovereign Majesty! Knowest thou not that He hath power to cast thee out "into the exterior darkness," where "weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. viii. 12) shall be heard for evermore in everlasting misery?

But if thou art not moved at the thought of having offended thy Creator, or by the fear of His almighty power, at least be ashamed of thy ingratitude in despising so great a Benefactor Who has loaded thee with so many and such precious gifts. Where, I ask, shalt thou find another benefactor like unto Him, Who has destined the whole creation for thy service: the courses of the stars, the temperature of the air, the fertility of the earth with the abundance of its fruits, and lastly, to crown thee at once with an epitome, so to speak, of all the benefits of life, "He spared not even His own and only Son, but delivered Him up for us all" (Rom. viii. 32). Yes, He delivered up His Only-Begotten for His children by adoption, the Lord for poor slaves, "the Just for the unjust" (1 Peter iii. 18). Tell me, "what is there that He ought to do more for thee and hath not done it?" (Is. v. 4) Ah, if thou grievest as thou oughtest under the force of these reflections, thou wilt be able to say with the

Prophet: "my bowels, my bowels are in pain; the senses of my heart are troubled within me" (Jer. iv. 19).

The fourth step in this way is confession of the mouth. For confession of the mouth ought to come next in order after self-knowledge, penitence of soul, and contrition of heart, because by these three "we believe unto justice, but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. x. 10). But to be in fact a means of salvation, it also must be threefold That is to say, it must be true, it must be candid, and it must be personal. The Most High ever loves and seeks the truth. How indeed could He be pleased with deception Who can never Himself deceive? Now, my brethren, I know and have met many who, coming for the grace of confession, have retired with the consciences which they came to cleanse more heavily burdened than ever. For they boast of their exploits in controversy if they are clerics, in gladiatorial combats if soldiers, concealing the spirit of pride under the veil of humility and condemning themselves in that sacrament which is the sole means of salvation for all sinners. There are others who come to confession influenced solely by the motive of fear, and others again who confess through hypocrisy; it is not confession they want at all, but only the semblance thereof. For how can you call that a true confession which is either made with simulation or extorted by fear? Especially as "the Holy Spirit of discipline flees from the deceitful" (Wisdom i. 5), and the Almighty is only pleased with spontaneous satisfaction. A true confession is that which proceeds from a contrite heart, neither constrained by fear nor coloured by artifice, but in "an afflicted spirit" (Ps. l. 19)

laying bare without disguise the interior state of the soul.

But it is further necessary, as I have said, that the confession of the mouth be candid, without any veil of concealment. For what is the use of confessing some of thy sins and hiding others, endeavouring to purge a part of thy conscience and to leave the remainder in filth? Is it possible from one and the same vessel to pour out sweet water and bitter (James iii. 11), good and bad? The Apostle assures thee that "all things are naked and open to the eyes of God" (Heb. iv. 13), and dost thou nevertheless conceal something from him who holds the place of God in this august sacrament? Do not so, my brother, but rather reveal and lay bare whatever troubles thy conscience; thou must fully expose thy wounds if thou desirest to have them healed by the doctor. "Seek the Lord," says the Wise Man, "in simplicity of heart" (Wisdom i. 1), not in duplicity of heart: for woe to them that "speak with a double heart" (Ps. xi. 3) "and to the sinner that goeth on the earth two ways" (Eccles. ii. 14).

I have said that confession should be personal. For one meets with many who can enumerate with much detail and solemnity the sins of others, and denounce in quite a variety of tones their neighbour's excesses: but whilst they keep the faults of those about them ever fresh in their memory, they seem to know nothing of their own. Most miserable and unhappy! Giving no thought to the sins they have themselves committed, they assume to themselves the office of lamenting those of their brethren. But have you not read that "the just man is his own

accuser in the beginning of his words." * Observe how the Scripture does not say, "the accuser of his neighbour," but "his own accuser." And have you forgotten the words of the Apostle James: "Confess therefore your sins one to another" (James v. 16)? "*Your* sins," he says, not your brethren's. "I know my iniquity," sings the Psalmist, "and my sin is always before me" (Ps. l. 5): "*my* sin," take notice, and "*my* iniquity," not *thine* or *their*.

The fifth step in the way of confession is mortification of the body. Here again we have to observe a trilogy. For bodily mortification must be practised with secrecy, with prudence, and with due authorisation. Thy tender flesh, fostered hitherto in pleasure and ease, must be made to suffer a perpetual martyrdom, and henceforth thou must abstain from even innocent enjoyments to atone for thy guilty gratifications in the past. But this ought to be done secretly, so that "thy left hand shall not know what thy right hand doeth" (Matt. vi. 3). For it is not in the mouths of men, but in the secret chambers of thine own heart so great a treasure should be deposited for safe-keeping, in order that "thy glory may be the testimony of thy conscience" (2 Cor. i. 12). I do not say that "thy light should not so shine before men that they may see thy good works and glorify thy Father Who is in heaven" (Matt. v. 16), but that thy intention should not aim at so poor and so perishable a reward as earthly glory. Surely nothing can be sadder than the lot of him who, after afflicting and torturing his flesh with fastings and watchings, consents to take

* Cf. Sermon on the Canticle of Canticles, Vol. I. p. 92, note. —(Mount Melleray Translation.)

human applause as his recompense in this life and to have hell for his portion in the life to come. I have said that bodily mortification must have the sanction of authority, because no offering can be acceptable in the sight of God unless it is made with the consent of the spiritual father (Holy Rule xlix.): the Most High will accept nothing that is tainted by self-will, nothing but what is offered with submission to the will of thy superior. The excluding of self-will in this way helps us greatly towards the vanquishing of pride, which, however, can never be completely rooted out so long as we continue to love the vanity of this world. But this self-discipline ought to be attended by discretion, lest through excessive zeal we should carry our bodily mortification so far as to injure our health, and should slay a friend, so to speak, in our eagerness to vanquish an enemy. Consider how much thy body can bear, take account of thy physical constitution, and let thy severity be kept in proportion. It is a duty to preserve our bodily health for the service of the Creator. How many have I seen chastising their bodies with such unsparing rigour at the beginning of their conversion and carrying their practices of penance so far beyond the limits of prudence as to render themselves incapable of attendance in choir, and so languid that they had in consequence to be put upon a special regime for many a long day! *

* Speaking on the same subject of indiscreet austerities, St. Teresa says (*Way of Perfection*, c. x.): "It is amusing to see the mortifications which some of their own accord inflict on themselves. Sometimes there seizes them a fit of immoderate and indiscreet penance which lasts about two days. The devil then suggests to their imagination that such mortifications injure them. So they never again do penance, not even what the rules of the Order enjoin—as they have found that

The sixth step has to do with the purification of our conduct. This, too, is threefold : for thou must abstain from doing evil to thyself, from injuring thy neighbour, and from consenting to the evil actions of others. Experience has taught thee how treacherous is the ice of pleasure, and wilt thou venture again upon its slippery surface ? Tell me, what fruit hast thou now from past indulgence ? The delight is no more, but the sin remains. Oh, then, for the future restrain thy feet from the wicked ways of carnal concupiscence. Subject thy neck to the yoke of the commandments of the Most High, so that there may be no iniquity in thy hands (Ps. vii. 4). Let insatiable gluttony be deprived of its sumptuous feasts, and the tongue of its vain discourses. " Turn away thine eyes that they may not behold vanity " (Ps. cxviii. 37), " stop thine ears that thou mayest not hear blood " (Is. xxxiii. 15), and then shalt thou be able to say with the Psalmist, " The Lord correcting hath corrected me " (Ps. cxvii. 18). But what avails it to confine such of thine actions as concern only thyself within the limits of rectitude, if thou desirest still to injure thy neighbour ? For it is only " he that hath done no evil to his neighbour, and hath not taken up a reproach against his neighbour " that " shall dwell in the tabernacle of the Lord " and " rest in His holy hill " (Ps. xiv. 1-3), only he " shall receive a blessing from the Lord and mercy from God his Saviour "

mortification does them harm ; and they do not observe even the least injunctions of the rule, such as silence, which cannot do us any harm. And as soon as we fancy we have a headache we refrain from going to choir, though this will hardly kill us. One day we omit going because our head aches, the next because it did ache, and three more lest it should ache."—(Translator.)

(Ps. xxiii. 5). But thou must not presume to regard thyself as innocent unless with all the authority thou canst command thou rebukest the impious and the enemies of virtue, opposing thyself as a wall for the defence of the house of Israel. So shalt thou have taken the sixth step, not only correcting thyself and abstaining from injuring others, but also refusing consent to the evil of others. For it is a true saying that he who has the power to prevent the sin of another and neglects to do so participates in the guilt of that sin. For when the interests of God are assailed and when truth is confounded with falsity, he who does not protest according to his power and position shall be condemned for his silence.

The seventh and last step in the way of confession is perseverance, which like the others has a relation to the number three. For there are three things that encourage us to persevere in well-doing, to wit, the example of the saints, the shortness of life, and the delicacy of our bodies. What suffering canst thou refuse to submit to when thou beholdest so many persons of both sexes and of every age and condition, not only enduring with patience, but eagerly welcoming all manner of torments for Christ? Consider the immaturity of boyhood, the fiery ardour of youth, the tenderness of virgins, the feebleness of age, the helplessness of decrepitude; turn thine eyes to any state of life thou pleasest: thou shalt everywhere discover a multitude of heroes hastening with fortitude towards the martyr's crown. Hast not thou been fashioned from the same clay as these, and vivified by the same kind of spirit? But perhaps thou wilt answer that there is no persecution raging now to

afford thee an opportunity of martyrdom, and that the service of Christ, so far from being attended with danger, exposes thee nowadays to nothing worse than universal commendation and applause. True, but if nevertheless thou shouldst be called upon to suffer something for the faith, thou oughtest to have no fear of torments that cannot be but short-lived. Kindly nature has so provided for us that no sufferings we may have to endure can be at once very protracted and very intense: if the agony is excessively severe it cannot long continue. For the union of soul and body cannot endure long under racking pains, but overpowered by the violent pressure, quickly weakens and dissolves. It is therefore the mark of a noble mind to contemn the fiercest torments, which in a short time will bring about so happy a change for the martyr, causing him to pass from labour to repose, from misery to glory. Consider also the delicacy of the body, which the least accident is often enough to deprive of life, or the persistent assaults of a little fever. Be willing, therefore, to sacrifice to virtue (should occasion require) the life which sooner or later must yield to necessity, thereby meriting an everlasting reward for the sufferings of a moment.

You see now, my brethren, how hard it is to run in the way of confession and how many are the paths to be followed. So true are the words of that illustrious Doctor of the Church who said, "It is more easy to find Christians who have preserved their baptismal innocence than those who have done adequate penance for their sins." *

So far I have been occupied in explaining to you—

* St. Ambrose, de Poenit, ii. 10.

as well as my feeble powers permitted—the manifold ways of confession, but I have reserved the weightiest words for the loftiest part of my subject, namely, the way of obedience. That, however, I shall endeavour to treat in a special sermon, lest if now taken in hand you might grow weary of the words of our Lord and Saviour, Who is blessed for evermore. Amen.

ON THE SEVEN DEGREES OF OBEDIENCE AND THE TERM TO WHICH THEY LEAD,

"Thou hast made known to me the ways of life, Thou shalt fill me with joy with Thy countenance: at Thy right hand are delights even to the end."—Ps. xv. 11.

Dearest brethren, "we are not sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God" (2 Cor. iii. 5). What salutary thought, indeed can be possible to a spirit shut up in this "earthen vessel" (2 Cor. iv. 7), surrounded with the weakness of human nature, confined to prison, corrupted by sin, borne down under the weight of worldly desires? "For the corruptible body is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation presseth down the mind that museth upon many things" (Wisdom ix. 15). But "the Spirit of wisdom is benevolent" (Wisdom i. 6) and He will not refuse to enlighten the darkness of our imprisoned spirit, to cure its corruption, to lift it up out of its depression. For He is the Spirit of loving-kindness Who "looseth them that are fettered, illumineth the blind, and raiseth up them that are cast down" (Ps. cxl. 7,8). He is also the Spirit of truth Who teaches us all truth, and not alone teaches it but brings it home to our minds (John xiv. 26): He brings the truth to our minds that we may seek it, He teaches us truth that we may understand it. He it is Whom the Lord Jesus, after showing Himself obedient to His Father "even unto the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 8), sent down upon His apostles, so obedient to His own behests. Does it not seem to you,

brethren, that they had mounted to the very summit of perfect obedience who, having obtained permission to abide anywhere in Jerusalem, shut themselves up within the walls of a humble dwelling and there "persevered with one mind in prayer" (Acts i. 14)? Have you comprehended the meaning of the words: "And they indeed (that is, the apostles) went forth from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus" (Acts v. 41)? Oh, on what strong supports of obedience must not they have rested who could exult in being dragged before councils for Christ's sake, who deemed it an honour to be scourged for Him! O happy souls, replenished with an abundance of the gifts of the Divine Spirit, to whom by a most marvellous inversion lowliness appears to be elevation, insult honour, tribulation a triumph! They were indeed "greatly filled with contempt," their "souls were greatly filled; they were a reproach to the rich and contempt to the proud" (Ps. cxxii. 3,4). Yet see with what boldness they braved the frowns of the high priests, the hauteur of the Pharisees, and the tumultuous fury of the mob, saying, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts v. 29). Consider those two great luminaries, Peter and Paul, turn your eyes upon the whole of that venerable apostolic college, and you will discover there a firmness of obedience unconquerably persevering under every variety of torments. Did not the King's own and only Son, Himself the King of that country which is brightened with everlasting joy and glory: did not He "become obedient unto death, even unto the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 8), that He might learn obedience

" by the things which He suffered " (Heb. v. 8) ? You have heard of His afflictions, hear now of His reward ; you have witnessed His trials, behold now His recompense ; you have looked upon His weakness, look now upon His might : " Wherefore," says the Apostle, " God also hath exalted Him and hath given Him a name which is above all names, that in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father " (Phil. ii. 9-11).

But I will say nothing more for the present about the obedience of Christ which by the singularity of its excellence is set apart, so to speak, and lifted high above our reach. Turn your eyes, therefore, on that illustrious Patriarch, that lamp of faith, that pattern of obedience, that pillar of justice—holy Abraham. He received from the Almighty the command : " Go forth out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and out of thy father's house, and come into the land which I shall show thee " (Gen. xii. 1) ; and immediately, without waiting for a second intimation of the divine will, he left his native country, he forsook his parents, he abandoned his inheritance, and became a stranger in a foreign land. A glorious example in truth, made more glorious by the fact that it was unprecedented, and consecrated in the person of him who was to be " the father of many nations " (Gen. xvii. 5). For he was the first man that ever renounced his possessions at the call of God and began to run with untiring speed the way of holy obedience. And when in his old age a son was born to him, a son in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed

(Gen. xxii. 18), the word of the Lord came to him again, saying, "Take thy only-begotten son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and go into the land of vision, and there thou shalt offer him for an holocaust upon one of the mountains which I will show thee" (ibid. 2).

Oh, what bitter words were these! How they pierced the loving heart of the poor father! He was commanded to slay his own son, bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh (Gen. ii. 23), a son for whom was predicted a glorious destiny, who was born in his old age of Sara his true and beloved wife, whose birth had brought him happiness, whom he had brought up in virtue and innocence. And lest aught should be lacking to the sorrow which consumed the father's most affectionate heart, he was reminded that Isaac was his "only-begotten son." Sons there are many, but not many only-begotten. Isaac was a son and an only-begotten son. He was the only-begotten of his father, and the only-begotten of his mother, and for him was reserved the inheritance. Look not, holy Patriarch, upon Ismael, because he was born in bondage and of a bonds-woman, and consequently can have no right either to freedom or to the patrimony. But forasmuch as there are many sons and not a few only-begotten sons who are not beloved, therefore, as if to intensify to the utmost the sorrow of the father's soul and to prove the obedience of this just man, the Lord added: "whom thou lovest." Nay more. In order that the recollection of his beloved child's name might arouse the full force of paternal affection, that his whole heart might be melted by so sweet a sound, the boy was called by his name Isaac, "which was called by the Lord before he was conceived in the

womb" (Gen. xvii. 19, Luke ii. 21). You perceive, brethren, with what mighty shocks of tribulation Abraham's heart of a father was smitten: commanded by God to destroy his own son, to slay his only-begotten, to sacrifice the one whom he most tenderly loved, to spill the blood of Isaac. It was indeed a strong temptation, a sore trial, a searching ordeal; for very sweet is the relationship of son to father and of father to son. But Abraham now forgets that sweetness and all the tender ties of natural affection: he saddles his ass, he arranges the faggots, he kindles the flame, he unsheathes the sword. He does not say to the Lord: "why hast Thou commanded this?" No, he neither murmurs nor complains; not even does he allow the sorrow of his soul to appear on his countenance. Without the least understanding of the order given him, he hastens with pious cruelty to immolate his beloved son. In this Abraham has given us an example of the most perfect and admirable obedience, an obedience of the highest excellence and worthy of all praise.

A very noble virtue, dearest brethren, is that of obedience. But it cannot make its home in a heart which has not been fully and most carefully cleansed from all worldly defilement. Now, in order to make its nature and excellence more easily understood, I will explain to you as well as I can what is the obedience we owe exclusively to God, what is that which is due from us to men, and thirdly what that is which must be rendered both to God and to men. Well, then, there are some things which are absolutely good and there are some things absolutely evil. It is absolutely good to love God, to love one's neighbour, to speak

truth, not to steal, not to bear false witness, not to commit adultery, with many other things which the limits of my discourse will not allow me to enumerate. What is contrary to any of these and all such-like I call absolutely evil. God commands us to do the absolute good but to abstain from the absolute evil. And this precept is weighted with a most holy and immutable authority which can in nowise be gainsaid, because it has the seal and sanction of Him Who saith, "I am the Lord and I change not" (Malachy iii. 6). If ever, therefore, that man whom the Divine Will hath placed over our heads (Ps. lxv. 12) should purpose to set aside this precept, "putting darkness for light and light for darkness" (Is. v. 20): that is, if he should order us to desist from the bounden good just instanced or to do what we know to be absolutely evil, we must boldly refuse to comply with his behest and fearlessly answer, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts v. 29). This is the obedience due exclusively to God which must by no means suffer restriction from the will of any human superior, but ought to be observed with the most inviolable fidelity. Take this, therefore, as a safe rule of conduct: never to omit the bounden good or to do what is evil even at the superior's command. But between things absolutely good and things absolutely evil there lies an intermediate class of actions, which, of themselves indifferent, are denominated good or evil according to the circumstances wherewith they are performed. To this intermediate class belong walking, sitting, speaking, observing silence, eating, fasting, sleeping, keeping watch, and everything such-like, which if done with the sanction of obedience

become absolutely good and meritorious of an eternal reward. It is therefore with regard to such morally indifferent actions that we are bound to show ourselves submissive and obedient to the superior's will, " asking no question for conscience' sake " (1 Cor. x. 25) ; for in this matter God has made nothing of obligation, but has left everything to be disposed according to the superior's will. Nor must we take scandal if the superior proves incompetent and exercises his authority without discretion, for we ought to remember that " there is no power but from God " and " therefore he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God " (Rom. xiii. 1,2). Here, my brethren, you have the obedience which is due to man, which we are obliged to render to man, as many of us, that is, as are subject to a human superior. It is the same which is common to God and to man, because whatever obedience is rendered to our visible rulers is also rendered to Him Who has said, " He that heareth you heareth Me " (Luke x. 16). Consequently there is need of great circumspection for those who would walk in this way wherein so many degrees lie hidden, the missing of a single one of which renders the possession of the rest without profit.

Now, the first degree of obedience is to obey with a good heart. In every age, even " from his youth the imagination and the thought of man's heart are prone to evil " (Gen. viii. 21) and everyone is disposed to follow the desires of his own corrupt will. For, from the woeful hour of the primeval transgression, innate to man has become the love of his own will, whereby, having abandoned the will of his Creator, he was there reduced to bondage where he hoped to

attain dominion. It is therefore difficult for him to renounce his self-will and to obey the will of another. But however great this difficulty, it has to be overcome ; for he that does not accomplish the command of his superior can never attain even to the first degree of obedience. It is the boast of the just man that he confesseth to the Lord with a good will : hear what he says, " I will voluntarily sacrifice to Thee and will give praise, O God, to Thy name " (Ps. liii. 8). So we may say that every good work derives all its value from the good will with which it has been accomplished and without which no work is well done, even when what is done appears good in itself. Hence the orders of superiors must be accepted by the will and the heart must renounce its voluntary questionings thereof, until, self-will expiring, we learn to love the commands of authority. You now understand what it is to obey with a good heart : to carry out without reluctance what the superior enjoins on us.

The second degree of obedience is to obey with simplicity. For it is written, " He that walketh with simplicity walketh with confidence " (Prov. x. 9). It was in the simplicity of his heart Solomon made with joy all his offerings to the Lord (1 Para. xxix. 17), and the Scriptures tell us to " seek the Lord in simplicity of heart " (Wisdom i. 1). We often find religious asking many questions on receiving a command from their superior. " Why ? " " Wherefore ? " " To what purpose ? " they repeatedly inquire, with multiplied complaints. " What is the reason of this order ? " " How has it come into the superior's mind ? " " Who has been his counsellor in this matter ? " From this disposition they advance to murmuring and to

expressions breathing discontent and indignation, and full of bitterness. Hence proceed the frequent excuses, the habit of feigning impossibility, the appeals to the intercession of friends. It was not thus Abraham acted. And hear the testimony rendered by the Lord Himself to a simple-hearted people: "At the hearing of the ear," He says, "they have obeyed Me" (Ps. xvii. 45): by which He designs to convey that the obedience of the subjects absolutely synchronised with the command of their King. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked" (Gal. vi. 7). Dost thou murmur against thy superior in the tabernacle of thy body? (Num. xvi; Ps. cv. 25). Oh, take care: the right hand of God is lifted up to smite thee to the dust (Ps. cv. 26). Walk with simplicity in the commandments of authority, adding simplicity to good will, enlightenment to purity of intention. For it is written, "The strength of the simple is the way of the Lord." (Prov. x. 29), which is nothing other than obedience. From this it follows that they who practise obedience and simplicity are clothed with heavenly strength.

The third degree of obedience is to obey with cheerfulness. "Not with sadness or of necessity," says the Apostle, "for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. ix. 7). A smiling countenance and a pleasant word give an added beauty to the obedience of a faithful subject. Hence even the pagan poet could sing:

> "The kindly look in worth outweighs
> Whatever gift the hand conveys."
> —(Ovid, *Metam.* viii.)

How indeed can he have true obedience whose face is clouded with the sickly shades of sadness? The

interior dispositions of the soul are usually made manifest by external signs, and it is hard to prevent the varying emotions of the mind from reflecting themselves exteriorly on the countenance. Thus a sombre aspect and a face overcast with the clouds of melancholy may be taken as a sign that the grace of devotion has withdrawn from that soul. Look at King David, how joyously he dances before the ark of the Lord (2 Kings vi. 14). And hear how wisely he rebukes the indignation of the haughty Michol, saying to her, "I will make myself meaner than I have done in the sight of the Lord" (ibid. 21,22). You see, then, my brethren, how necessary and becoming it is to show cheerfulness in accomplishing the works of obedience. What superior, I ask, if he could help it, would think of giving any order to a subject whom he observes to be a prey to sadness? Therefore, if you desire to be perfect, receive with alacrity and with a joyous air the injunctions of them that are over you, adding cheerfulness of expression to willingness of heart and simplicity in the execution of what is commanded.

The fourth degree of obedience is to obey with promptitude. "The word of God runneth swiftly" (Ps. cxlvii. 15) and desires swiftness in such as follow it. See with what velocity he ran who said, "I have run the way of Thy commandments" (Ps. cxviii. 32). The truly obedient man does not know what it is to delay; he abhors procrastination; he is a stranger to tardiness; he anticipates the orders of his superiors; he has his eyes always ready for seeing at the word of command, his ears for hearing, his tongue for speaking, his hands for doing, his feet for walking: in short he keeps himself always and altogether on the alert in order to carry

out promptly and fully whatsoever the superior may see fit to enjoin. Let me show you the Lord requiring something to be done in haste and the obedient man making haste to obey Him. "And when Jesus was come to the place, looking up He saw him and said to him: Zacheus, make haste and come down, for this day I must abide in thy house. And he made haste and came down, and received Him with joy" (Luke xix. 5,6). You observe how this publican came down in haste and received his Lord with gladness. You have heard of his obedience, hear now how his obedience was rewarded. "Jesus said to him: This day is salvation come to this house" (ibid. 9). Consider also the great mystery enunciated at the conclusion of these words to which the obedience of Zacheus gave occasion—the sentence of mercy sealed with the seal of mercy: "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (ibid. 10). Have you not read how the children of Israel were commanded to eat in haste the Paschal Lamb (Exod. xii. 11)? By this is signified that the eating of the true Paschal Lamb should be done hastily: that is to say, that those commandments which Christ has given in the Law, those which He proclaimed with His own lips during His sojourn on earth, and those which He left to be announced to us by the rulers of His Church should all be accomplished with prompt obedience.* Therefore, dearest brethren, when you have learned to obey with a willing heart, a simple intention, and a cheerful countenance, go the further step and obey

* The Saint purposes this as a *secondary* and *symbolic* signification of the divine injunction. Cf. note pp. 150, 151, Vol. I, of present series.—(Translator.)

with promptitude so that you may be not only "swift to hear," as St. James recommends, but also swift to perform.

The fifth degree of obedience is to obey with fortitude. "Do ye manfully," sings the Psalmist, "and let your heart be strengthened, all ye that hope in the Lord" (Ps. xxx. 25). Fortitude is not exercised in refusing to obey, but rather in refusing to be drawn away from obedience. Even though tribulation should threaten to engulf thee, though persecution should rage against thee, though sinners should endeavour to entrap thee, though the malignant should place obstacles in thy path, abandon not the way of obedience, but say with the Prophet, "I am ready and am not troubled, that I may keep Thy commandments" (Ps. cxviii. 60). For what use are the other qualities of obedience just mentioned, if it lacks that fortitude which places the virtues in the citadel of constancy, and surrounds them with a rampart strong enough to render unavailing all the efforts of their furious foes? Hast thou put forth thy hand to strong things? (Prov. xxxi. 19). If so, thou must act with promptitude and obey with constancy; and harsh words and bitter stripes, so far from making thee abandon the royal road of obedience, should rather cause thee to advance in it with a more steadfast devotion. But now to sum up in a few words the praises of fortitude, I say it is a virtue which preserves and defends all other virtues. To promptitude in obedience, therefore, unite fortitude, constancy to haste, and so with full confidence you may sign with the Psalmist, "The hand of the sinners hall not move me" (Ps. xxxv. 12).

The sixth degree of obedience is to obey with humility. "He—the God Who made us—was mindful of us," says the Psalmist, "in our humility" (Ps. cxxxv. 23). Humility is beyond doubt a great virtue, without whose companionship the virtue of fortitude not only ceases to be a virtue but even degenerates into a vice, the vice of pride. See with what courage King Saul carried himself so long as he remained little in his own eyes! What hosts of the Philistines he put to rout! With what resistless might he wielded the sword! But the moment "pride took hold of him" and "passed into the affection of the heart" (Ps. lxxii. 6-7) he became weak and impotent, so that he was easily conquered and overthrown by his enemies. Behold now another king in whom sublime humility and humble sublimity shine forth together in happy combination. "O Lord," exclaims the Royal Prophet, "my heart is not exalted, nor are my eyes lofty" (Ps. cxxx. 1). Review his entire career with the closest attention, turn your gaze whithersoever you please: you will always find David adorned with the flowers of humility. Hear what he says in another place, speaking to the Lord: "I will guard my fortitude for Thee" (Ps. lviii. 10). What truth there is in these words of a just observer of justice! For there are very many who guard their fortitude, not for God at all, but for the sake of vainglory, "who trust in their own strength" (Ps. xlviii. 7) and glory in the virtues they have received as if they had not received them (1 Cor. iv. 7), doing an injury to the Creator from Whom is "every best gift and every perfect gift" (James i. 17). In order, therefore, that your fortitude may not be converted into pride, it

must be seasoned with the salt of humility: because it avails nothing to obey with fortitude if at the same time you are unhappily proud at heart. Hence it is only they who, "when they have done all those things that are commanded them, say: We are unprofitable servants, we have done that which we ought to do" (Luke xvii. 10): it is only such can be considered to guard their fortitude for the Lord.

The seventh degree of obedience is to obey with perseverance. For it is not to him who begins, but to him who perseveres unto the end that salvation is promised (Matt. xxiv. 13). Good beginnings are common enough, but perseverance in good is rare. Perseverance is the only daughter of the Supreme Monarch; it is the fruit and the consummation of the virtues, and the treasury of all good; it is a virtue "without which no man shall see God" (Heb. xii. 14) or merit the regard of God; it is "the end of the law unto justice to every one that believeth" (Heb. x. 4), the bride-chamber wherein all the sister virtues have consecrated their holy nuptial-couch. What profits it to run if you give up before reaching the goal? "So run that you may obtain the prize" (1 Cor. ix. 24), as the great Apostle counsels. Oh, with what unflagging feet did he finish the race who said, "I have completed my course" (2 Tim iv. 7)! Oh, how long a course of evil that penitent thief brought to a happy term (Luke xxiii. 43), who, "being made perfect in a short space, fulfilled a long time" (Wisdom iv. 13)! Consider, on the other hand, what the Lord of the prophets declares, speaking by the mouth of one of the prophets: "If the just man turn himself away from his justice and do iniquity, shall he live? All

the justices which he hath done shall not be remembered" (Ezech. xviii. 24).

You perceive, dearest brethren, in what a profound depth of oblivion are buried all those virtues on which final perseverance has not set its seal. It is perseverance alone that can introduce the lover of obedience into the royal bed-chamber where "his eyes shall see the King in His beauty" (Is. xxxiii. 17), that King "on Whom the angels desire to look" (1 Peter i. 12). Consequently, "in this way wherein we are walking they—the spirits of pride—have hidden a snare for us" (Ps. cxli. 4). It is a difficult way to walk in, full of windings and thorny brambles, and further embarrassed with the obstructions of numerous entangling chains. Does it seem to you that that subject merits the reward of obedience who receives a command which he has long and ardently desired, as when that which is ordered is calculated to bring him honourable recognition, is for him an abundant source of gratification and joy, or is supported and dignified by the semblance of power? On the other hand, would you assign any merit to that obedience which obeys in hard things entirely against the grain, when the mind of the subject is confounded by an order which he finds painful to hear, more painful to fulfil, and still more painful to carry out with perseverance? Surely not.* No, my brethren; for we must practise obedience in such a way as to detach our hearts from

* "If he obey grudgingly, his obedience will not be rewarded, even though he should perform what is commanded him; on the contrary God, who beholds the secret dispositions of the heart, so far from accepting his imperfect obedience will punish him as a murmurer unless he makes satisfaction and amends."—*Holy Rule of St. Benedict*, ch. vi. (Mount Melleray Translation).

what pleases us and willingly embrace what we dislike, if we would follow Him Who fled from the proffered crown and went forth freely to meet His cross (John vi. 15, xviii. 4).

You see, then, my brethren, that these ways of obedience are the " ways of life " (Ps. xv. 11), because they conduct us to life everlasting. " Blessed are the meek " (Matt. v. 4), for to them the Lord shall make known His ways (Ps. l. 15), so that each of them may sing with the Psalmist, " Thou shalt fill me with joy with Thy countenance " (Ps. xv. 11). For " so long as we are in the body we are absent from the Lord " (2 Cor. v. 6), far removed from the face of God, from the vision of His glory, from the contemplation of His divine majesty: unless that our " compassionate and merciful Lord " (Ps. cii. 8) sometimes " maketh the light of His countenance to shine upon us " (Ps. lxvi. 1). Now this happens when, after the removal of that cloud which before hindered the heavenward flight of our prayer, we " draw near to Him and are enlightened " (Ps. xxxiii. 6), " beholding the glory of the Lord with open face " (2 Cor. iii. 18). Nevertheless, the words " with open face " do not properly apply to that vision of God whereby " we see Him now through a glass, in a dark manner " (1 Cor. xiii. 12) whilst as yet we are confined in the prison of the flesh; but they may be used to mark the contrast between such spiritual contemplation and the blindness of bodies. So the created spirit passes forth occasionally from its earthly tenement to unite itself to the Creator of spirits, cleaving to Whom it is made one spirit with Him (1 Cor. vi. 17). But this union of contemplation is, comparatively

speaking, of no great value, because the human spirit, enclosed in its material envelope, is often dragged down again to earth almost immediately by the weight of that bodily mass, and after being raised above all creatures, finds itself on a sudden beneath the most vile. So, too, in His turn the Creator-Spirit, "Whose works are great, perfectly accomplished according to all His wills" (Ps. cx. 2), often visits us without our being aware and retires from us, still without attracting our attention: for we "know not whence He cometh and whither He goeth" (John iii. 8).* And not infrequently it happens that the more persistently He is sought, the more quickly He takes His departure, agreeably to what He says Himself to the Spouse in the Canticle: "Turn away thine eyes from Me, for they have made Me flee away" (Cant. vi. 4). It may happen also that He comes to us unsought and, on the other hand, withdraws when we seek Him: just as the Spouse complains in the Canticle that although she has sought Him in so many ways she failed to find Him. But the countenance of which we are thus allowed to catch occasional glimpses is not the face of that glory of the Lord which shineth above the Cherubim. For to the host of angels the Divinity reveals Itself in all Its purity and splendour, whereas It is never seen by mortal eyes except through mystic veils and shadowy images.

Since therefore we cannot behold the face of God as He is in Himself in this life, neither can we attain to the fulness of joy until He takes us to Himself (John xiv. 3), until the members are united to their Head and God becomes all in all (1 Cor. xv. 28). Then

* Cf. Sermon XVII. on the Canticle of Canticles.

at last we shall have the fulness of that whereof we can now enjoy only the taste. For we are bidden now to " taste and see that the Lord is sweet " (Ps. xxxiii. 9) ; but this taste never becomes a draught, because although we are given a sight of the " torrent of pleasure" (Ps. xxxv. 9) we are not yet allowed to plunge into it. There is sweetness in the taste (Ps. xxxiii. 9) but in the fulness a most ravishing delight. The souls of the saints which, parted from their bodies, have mounted already to the blissful seats above, drink indeed of the heavenly fountain, yet not unto satiety, not unto intoxication. For although they even now enjoy great happiness, nevertheless they still yearn for the resurrection of their bodies from the tomb, so that " they may receive double in their land " (Is. lxi. 7) and be filled to overflowing with joy everlasting. At present they are given each one a single white robe, and it is said to them that they must rest for a little time (Apoc. vi. 11) until the impious shall be " destroyed with a double destruction " (Jer. xvii. 18) and they themselves crowned with a double beatitude. So long, therefore, as they do not possess that which they desire to possess, they cannot be described as inebriated, but yet they enjoy the vision of God in such a manner that they can be said to drink from the fountain. And as they drink without difficulty so do they rest without toil, awaiting the hour when the divine glory shall be fully revealed and all their desires shall be satisfied (Ps. xvi. 15). For when at last we shall arise " unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ " (Ephes. v. 13), and the glorious city of the saints shall be adorned with pearls (Apoc. xxi. 21), and " the dwelling

therein shall be as it were of all rejoicing" (Ps. lxxxvi. 7): then shall the Lord "fill us with joy with His countenance" (Ps. xv. 11), "because we shall see Him as He is" (1 John iii. 2). Then "we shall be inebriated with the plenty of His house and He shall make us drink—unto satiety—of the torrent of His pleasure" (Ps. xxxv. 9). Then shall He say to us, "Eat, O friends, and drink, and be inebriated, my dearly beloved" (Cant. v. 1), because thenceforth by indefeasible right the light of His countenance shall be sealed upon our souls (Ps. iv. 7), and the body of our lowness shall be conformed to the Body of His glory (Phil. iii. 21).

After saying that the Lord "shall fill him with joy with His countenance" the Psalmist continues, "At Thy right hand are delights even to the end" (Ps. xv. 11). The present life, my brethren, is the left hand of God; His right hand is the life to come. Just as we are wont to hold in our left hand such things as we do not value very highly, so we understand by God's left hand this earthly existence in which the Lord allows His elect to be afflicted and even put to death by the impious. Does it not seem to you that they have been abandoned to oblivion who cry out to God, "For Thy sake we are killed all the day long, we are counted as sheep for the slaughter: why turnest Thou Thy face away and forgettest our want and our trouble?" (Ps. xliii. 22-24). But the right hand signifies that happy life wherein nothing is to be found but joy unmixed, whereof nothing can be said but what the Psalmist sings: "Glorious things are said of thee, O city of God" (Ps. lxxxvi. 3). There are treasured up those delights of which the Apostle

declares that " eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him " (1 Cor. ii. 9). So, in the one hand are momentary tribulations, in the other everlasting delights: " delights unto the end." What is this end? The Apostle explains: " The end is Christ, unto justice to every one that believeth." Yes, my brethren, He is the end of Whom Wisdom says that " He reacheth from end to end mightily and ordereth all things sweetly " (Wisdom viii. 1). For the vision of God is our last and absolute end. He, I say, is our end, after attaining to Whom we shall have nothing further to desire: Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom of the Church, Who is over all things and blessed for evermore. Amen.

ON THE FOUR FOUNTAINS OF THE SAVIOUR AND THE WATERS THEY CONTAIN.

" You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains." —Is. xii. 3.

" You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains." Dearest brethren, the Saviour Jesus Christ has been given us to replace the paradise we lost by the primeval transgression. But there was only one fountain in the midst of the earthly paradise whence four streams issued out to water that garden of pleasure (Gen. ii. 10); whilst in the Heart of the Saviour we have four spiritual fountains, containing four different kinds of spiritual water, wherewith the Church throughout the universe is abundantly irrigated. These four fountains are truth, wisdom, power, and charity; and from each of them, as I have said, a special kind of water may be drawn. From the fountain of truth are derived the waters of judgment, from the fountain of wisdom the waters of counsel, from the fountain of power the waters of succour, and the waters of holy desires from the fountain of charity. It is the waters of judgment that enable us to distinguish between what is lawful and what is unlawful. And it is through the waters of counsel we can tell what is expedient for us and what is not. But inasmuch as the elect, after discriminating rightly in these matters, are still exposed to assault from two kinds of temptation, that of fear, namely, to cast them down, and that of pleasure to seduce them: it is necessary that they be protected from the one by the assistance of the

divine power, and from the other by holy desires springing from the fountain of charity. For, as a certain holy man has said, evil desires are extinguished in the soul by desires that are good. Or I may reason thus: How does it avail me to know what is lawful and expedient—which I am taught by judgment and counsel—unless along with such knowledge I have also the power to act in accordance therewith? Therefore, after the waters of judgment and counsel I am still under the necessity to seek those of power. Furthermore, what avails even power in addition to knowledge, if charity be lacking which is the consummation of all? It is true, then, that after the waters of judgment, of counsel, and of power, we must draw those of holy desires from the fountain of charity, so that all our thoughts, words, actions, and sufferings may be directed to the goal of eternal life.

But it is necessary, as I think, to elucidate and confirm with Scriptural authority what I have been saying about these fountains and their waters: the images of gold I have offered you must be inlaid with silver (Cant. i. 10). My first statement, however, there is no need to prove, for I suppose it will be admitted by all without question: namely, that all the four fountains have their origin in the Heart of Jesus. But that from these four fountains are derived the waters of judgment, counsel, succour, and holy desires, is a proposition that requires to be substantiated. Let King David, therefore, come forward and testify that it is from the fountain of truth we draw the waters of judgment. Such undoubtedly must have been his conviction when he sang to the Lord, "Let

my judgment come forth from Thy countenance" (Ps. xvi. 2). And surely that holy man would not acknowledge any judgment as his own except such as came forth from the Lord's countenance, that is to say, from the fountain of truth, knowing as he did that the elect of God are ruled by the judgments of truth as with a rod of iron (Ps. ii. 9). Indeed, it was because he believed himself to be under the same happy governance that he sang so joyously: "The judgments of the Lord are true, justified in themselves, more to be desired than gold and many precious stones and sweeter than honey and the honeycomb" (Ps. xviii. 10, 11). But lest we should ever wander from the ways of truth thus marked out for us, let us listen to the threats pronounced by the Father by the mouth of the same Prophet. "If they profane My justices," He says, "and keep not My commandments, I will visit their iniquities with a rod and their sins with stripes" (Ps. lxxxviii. 32-3). These mysteries of the divine judgment have been unlocked to us by the gatekeeper of the heavenly kingdom, where he says, "The time is that judgment should begin at the house of God. And if first at us, what shall be the end of them that believe not the Gospel of God?" (1 Peter iv. 17). He is addressing himself here, as is obvious, to the elect alone. But there is another judgment for the reprobate, and that also proceeds from truth. Hence the words of St. Paul: "For we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against them that do such things" (Rom. ii. 2). And He Who is Himself the Subsisting Truth combines the two judgments when He says, "For judgment I am come into this world, that they who see not may see, and that they

who see may become blind" (John ix. 39), distinguishing them again in the words: "And these—the reprobate—shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting" (Matt. xxv. 46).

My brethren, we have now seen how the waters of judgment are derived from the well of truth. Let us consider next how from the fountain of wisdom we may draw the waters of counsel. Surely it will be allowed by all that the Doctor of Nations was a wise man, since his brother-apostle, Peter, testifies to the wisdom given him by God (2 Peter iii. 15), and every word he has written is redolent of the highest wisdom. Him, accordingly, I will ask to give us salutary counsels and to teach us thereby what is expedient for poor pilgrims like ourselves who are journeying in haste towards our heavenly home. "Concerning virgins," he replies, "I have no commandment of the Lord; but I give counsel, as having obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. I think, therefore, that this is good for the present necessity, that it is good for a man so to be" (1 Cor. vii. 25-6), that is, to remain in the state of virginity. If he had "a commandment of the Lord concerning virgins" nothing, of course, would be lawful for us save that which was enjoined. As the case is, however, it being equally allowable to marry or to remain single; what counsel could be briefer or better than that which is conveyed in the words: "it is good for a man so to be"? Particularly as the pressure of necessity is wont to make itself felt often enough, and the rapid course of time is carrying us swiftly towards the grave, and "the fashion of this world passeth away" (ibid. 31). Likewise, when speaking of the state of widowhood, he says,

" But more blessed shall she—the widow—be, if she so remain, according to my counsel " (ibid. 40), that is, if she remains unmarried. And lest it should be thought that he derived this counsel from his own heart and not from the fountain of wisdom, he took care to add, " And I think that I also have the Spirit of God " (ibid.). But wherefore do I thus waste time over a few examples of the Apostle's wisdom, when in his writings can he found, if sought for with diligence, numberless counsels of salvation suitable to either sex and to every rank and condition ?

Now if anyone should wish, out of idle curiosity, to assure himself of the truth of what he has heard, namely, that it is from the well of wisdom counsel issues forth : let him read the inspired books attributed to Wisdom which are occupied from beginning to end with giving wholesome counsel. But should he be animated with the more prudent and profitable desire of seeking the means of salvation, he shall hear Wisdom Itself calling out to him in the Gospel and announcing the salutary truth : " If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments " (Matt. xix. 17). Whose commandments, dost thou ask ? " Fear God," answers the Wise Man, " and keep His commandments " (Eccles. xii. 13). Listen again to Wisdom saying to thee with motherly affection, " My son, give me thy heart " (Prov. xxiii. 26). Oh, how I wish that my poor heart were perfectly open to receive the words of Him from Whose divine lips I hear sounding such sweet and saving counsels ! Would to God I were allowed to dip the pen of my tongue (Ps. xliv. 2) in that well of holy wisdom, that so I might be able to say in the manner most profitable to you all that

remains to be said on the subject of the other two fountains, power, that is, and charity.

Now these four fountains of mine so intermingle their peculiar savours that he who tastes of one feels drawn to the others by a most sweet and delightful attraction. It is thus, my brethren, I am now invited to pass from the well of wisdom to that of power, and to show you how hence are derived the waters of protection, so far as I shall be assisted by Him Who is Himself the Power of God (1 Cor. i. 24). As you heard me say a moment since that the judgments of truth are two in kind, determining for us what is lawful and what illicit ; and that the counsels of wisdom are two in kind also, distinguishing between that which is expedient and that which is not : so here we have to acknowledge that from the fountain of power can be drawn two species of the waters of protection, the one suited to wash the elect from their stains, the other to refresh them in the fire of affliction. Let me present you with examples of both. In the Evangelist St. Luke we read the following narrative : " There was a certain woman having an issue of blood twelve years, who had bestowed all her substance on physicians and could not be healed by any. She came behind Him—the Lord Jesus—and touched the hem of His garment, and immediately the issue of her blood stopped. And Jesus said : Who is it that touched Me ? And all denying, Peter and they that were with Him said : Master, the multitudes throng and press Thee, and dost Thou say : who touched Me ? And Jesus said : Somebody hath touched Me, for I know that virtue is gone out from Me " (Luke viii. 43-6). Behold, my brethren, what waters of succour this poor

woman obtained from the fountain of power, whereby she was perfectly cured of the issue of blood which no medical skill had been able to remedy. But should anyone object that the inspired testimony I have just quoted does not make at all for my purpose, since, as it appears, that woman was cured, not of any spiritual malady, but only of a disease of the flesh: I answer that it is the way with the divine power to heal the maladies of the soul before healing those of the body. Hence on another occasion, when a paralytic was laid at His feet to be cured, wishing, like a good and loving-kind physician, to relieve first that which was first in importance, the conscience before the flesh, "He said to the man sick of the palsy: Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee" (Matt. ix. 2). Then, having thus healed the heart, He also restored health to the body, with the words: "Arise, take up thy bed and go into thy house" (ibid. 6). In the same way, therefore, He first healed the heart of the woman who suffered from an issue of blood, by imparting to her interiorly the gift of faith, according to what is written: "God gave testimony . . . purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts xv. 8, 9); through which gift she merited to receive the external favour of bodily health. For this is what the Lord implied when He said, "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go thy way in peace" (Luke viii. 48).

But with regard to my contention that it is from this same fountain of power are drawn the waters of help in tribulation, I think it is sufficiently proved by the case of the three young men cast into the fiery furnace to whom the raging flames felt but as "the blowing of a wind bringing dew" (Dan. iii. 50); and still better

by the case of the illustrious martyr, St. Vincent, who, as we are told, in the midst of his terrible torments, not alone gave an example of unflinching fortitude, but even kept inviting the executioner to increase his pains. "Come," he exclaimed, "vent upon me the full force of thy fury. Thou shalt see that by the power of God I shall be stronger in supporting pains than thou in inflicting them." Much more might be said concerning this fountain of power, but I prefer to be brief, because I like less to discourse about its waters than to drink thereof.

To the fourth fountain we are called by the voice of the Redeemer Himself where He says, "If any man thirst let him come to Me and drink" (John vii. 37). And the Evangelist proceeds to explain what that fountain is to which we are thus invited: "Now this He said of the Spirit Whom they should receive who believed in Him" (ibid. 39). That is to say, the Spirit of charity "Whom the world cannot receive" (John xiv. 17) but only such as really believe in the Lord Jesus. From this fountain, therefore, let us draw the salutary waters of holy desires, and let us divide them into two streams. For just as there are two precepts of charity, so likewise are there two species of holy desires whereby those precepts may be fulfilled. The desires by which we love God for His own sake differ widely from those wherewith we love our neighbour in God or for the sake of God. The former admit of no measure at all,* since we are obliged to love the

* The Saint begins his beautiful Treatise on the love of God with the words: "Thou desirest to learn from me what ought to be the motive and what the measure of our love for God. I will tell thee in short: The motive for loving God is because He is God, and the measure of our love for Him is to love without measure."—(Translator.)

Lord with our whole heart and with our whole soul and with all our strength (Matt. xxii. 37); but in the latter a measure has been appointed for us, since it is said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (ibid. 39). It was with the former the Royal Prophet was inflamed when he cried out, "As the hart panteth after the fountains of waters, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God" (Ps. xli. 2); also when he sang, "My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord" (Ps. lxxxiii. 3). The latter kind the Apostle exhibited to the Romans when he said to them, "I long to see you that I may impart unto you some spiritual grace to strengthen you" (Rom. i. 11). And the Lord in the Gospel exhibited the same to His disciples by the words, "With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you before I suffer" (Luke xxii. 15).

It is needful to remark, my brethren, that there are three grades of affection through which the human mind is moved and uplifted to the pure love of God; and this seems to be the reason why we are commanded to love the Lord our God with our whole heart, with our whole soul, and with our whole strength. The first of these degrees is characterised by tenderness, the second by prudence, the third by constancy. The Apostle Peter had the first when he sought to dissuade his Master from going to meet His death: for undoubtedly he must have loved Him with tenderness the thought of Whose passion he was unable to endure. But the Lord said to him, "Go behind Me, Satan, because thou savourest not the things that are of God but those that are of men" (Mark viii. 33). Instructed by these words, and understanding the inestimable benefits that would accrue to mankind from the

Redeemer's death, he began at last to love prudently, that is, with his whole soul, Him Whom hitherto he had loved but tenderly and with his whole heart. Not yet, however, did he love with all his strength: otherwise the fear of death would never have caused him to deny his Master. But after the resurrection and the ascension, when the Holy Spirit was given from on high then in very truth he learned to love his Lord with his whole strength, insomuch that he feared not at a later time to endure for His name's sake even the terrible torment of the cross.

Charity towards our neighbour is also threefold, in the sense that it is exercised for a threefold end: either to enkindle charity where it does not as yet exist, or, where it does exist, to prevent either its total extinction or its diminution.* Whosoever exercises charity towards his neighbour in these ways and with a pure intention, such a one undoubtedly shall deserve to attain to that higher charity which is nothing other than God Himself (1 John iv. 16).

* It is the common teaching that charity and sanctifying grace can never suffer diminution in themselves; they are lost entirely by any mortal sin, but venial faults do not *directly* affect them. This is consonant to reason: for if venial sins diminished grace and charity in any degree, given a sufficient number they would deprive the soul of these gifts altogether—the essential effect of mortal sin. But they can be said to diminish grace and charity *indirectly* in so far as they cool fervour, strengthen the passions, impede the inflow of actual grace, and thus dispose to mortal sin.—(Translator.)

ON THE FAITH AND VIRTUES OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

" Wisdom hath built herself a house, she hath hewn her out seven pillars "—Prov. ix. 1.

" Wisdom hath built herself a house." First of all, my brethren, it is necessary to enquire what is the wisdom spoken of here. For there is more than one kind of wisdom. We have heard of the wisdom of the flesh which is " the enemy of God " (Rom. viii. 7). We have heard also of the wisdom of this world which is " foolishness before God " (1 Cor. iii. 19). Both of these are, in the words of the Apostle James, " earthly, sensual, devilish " (James iii. 15). According to wisdom in either of these senses a man is called wise when he is skilled to do evil and knows not how to do good (Jer. iv. 22). And in this his wisdom, he merits reproof and meets destruction, as it is written : " I will catch the wise in their own craftiness " (1 Cor. iii. 19), " I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the prudence of the prudent I will reject " (1 Cor. i. 19). It seems to me that we may, without untruth or impropriety, apply to those endowed with this kind of wisdom the words of King Solomon : " There is an evil that I have seen under the sun : a man who is wise in his own conceit." Now all such wisdom, whether of the flesh or of the world, is obviously quite incapable of building anything solid, nay, it will rather destroy every house where it is permitted to dwell. There is, however, another kind of wisdom " that is from

above," and "first indeed is chaste, then peaceable" (James iii. 17). This, my brethren, is none other than Christ Himself, "the Power of God and the Wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i. 24), Who, as the Apostle further testifies, "is made for us of God wisdom, and justice, and sanctification, and redemption" (ibid. 30).

This Divine Wisdom, then, Who was with God and was Himself God (John i. 1), coming down to us from the bosom of the Father, "hath built Himself a house," that is, hath fashioned for Himself a Mother, the glorious Virgin Mary, and in that most holy house He "hath hewn out seven pillars." Now, what means the expression, "He hath hewn out in His house seven pillars," except that He hath prepared His Mother by faith and good works to be a dwelling-place worthy of His Majesty? For three added to four make seven. Now, the number three belongs to faith because of the Blessed Trinity, the principal object and mystery of faith; whilst the number four is consecrated to good works on account of the four-fold cardinal virtues. I say, then, that the Three Persons of the august Trinity dwelt in the holy Virgin by the presence of Their undivided Majesty, although the Son alone was in her by the assumption of human nature. So much is clear from the words of the heavenly envoy, who, in revealing to Mary the profound depths of this mystery, said to her, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee" (Luke i. 28). And a little further on: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the Power of the Most High shall overshadow thee" (ibid. 35). Behold now O most happy Virgin, thou hast the Lord, thou hast the Power of the Most High, thou hast the Holy Ghost. Thou hast consequently the Three Divine

Persons, the Father, the Son,* and the Holy Spirit. For the Father cannot be without the Son, or the Son without the Father, or without Both the Holy Spirit Who proceeds from Both. Hence the Son once said to His disciples, "Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in Me?" (John xiv. 10). And again, "The Father Who abideth in Me, He doth the works" (ibid.). It is manifest, therefore, that faith in the Trinity was found in the Virgin's heart, since it is by faith that God dwelleth in the hearts of the just (Eph. iii. 17).

Was she also endowed with the four cardinal virtues? This is a question that seems well worthy of our consideration. In the first place, then, let us see if she possessed fortitude. But how could that virtue have been wanting to one who, renouncing the pomps of the world and the pleasures of the flesh, was determined to live to God alone in the holy state of virginity? Unless I mistake, it is of this admirable Virgin King Solomon speaks when he says, "Who shall find the valiant woman? Far and from the uttermost coasts is the price of her" (Prov. xxxi. 10). So great indeed was her fortitude that she crushed the head of the "old serpent" (Apoc. xii. 9), as the Lord had predicted: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head" (Gen. iii. 15). That she was temperate, prudent, and just is as clear as the daylight from the words addressed to her by the Archangel, and from her own words in reply. For when Gabriel saluted her with such extraordinary marks of respect, saying, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee," far from exulting at the thought that she was

* Christ is called the Power of God (1 Cor. i, 24).

favoured with such singular graces and privileges, she remained silent and " was troubled, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this might be " (Luke i. 29). Does she not appear in all this a most beautiful model of temperance ? And does she not give us an equally noble example of prudence when, on being informed by the Angel of the heavenly mysteries about to be accomplished in her, she made careful enquiries as to the manner of her conception and parturition, because, as she said, she knew not man (Luke i. 34) ? She practised justice * in the highest degree when she acknowledged that she was but the handmaid of the Lord (ibid. 38). For such confession is characteristic of the just, as the Prophet testifies where he says, speaking to the Lord, " But as for the just, they shall confess to Thy name, and the upright shall dwell with Thy countenance." (Ps. cxxxix. 14). And in another place we find this instruction for the just : " You shall say in your confession : all the works of the Lord are exceeding good " (Eccles. xxxix. 20 21).

Accordingly, my brethren, the Virgin Mary is a model of fortitude in her purpose to remain unmarried, of temperance in her silence under praise, of prudence in her inquiries, of justice in her confession. And it was with these four pillars of the moral virtues, added to the three others of faith—of which I have already spoken—that the Divine Wisdom built for Himself a

* According to St. Bernard, humility is a part of justice, whereby we give God what is due to Him and attribute to ourselves that which alone is ours—sin and nothingness : just as pride may be viewed as opposed to justice, since it consists in the appropriation by the creature of what belongs to God. Moralists, however, look upon humility as a subordinate part of the virtue of temperance. Cf. Hickey, *Ethica*, p. 117.—(Translator).

house within her ; and He so filled her mind that from the fulness thereof her very flesh was fertilised, and by an unique and wonderful privilege of grace the Virgin brought forth, clothed in flesh, the same Wisdom she had first conceived in her spotlessly pure spirit. As for ourselves, dearest brethren, if we also desire to become the house of uncreated Wisdom, it is necessary that we should be propped up with these same seven pillars, that is, we must be prepared to receive Him with faith and good works. With regard to the moral virtues, I am of opinion that justice alone will suffice us, on condition, however, that it embraces in itself the other three.* Therefore, lest it be deceived by ignorance or error, it must have prudence for guide ; and let temperance walk at its right hand and fortitude at its left, for otherwise it will be liable to slip and fall by bending unduly to one side or the other.

* How the perfection of Justice includes the other three cardinal virtues is explained in the *Treatise on Consideration*, ch. viii.

ON THE THREE DEGREES OF DIVINE LOVE.*

" Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with all thy strength."—Deut. vi. 5.

Dearest brethren, " love not the world, nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world the charity of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh and the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life, which are not from the Father " (1 John ii. 15-16). What then ? Are we to understand there are other good things from the Father wherewith we shall be compensated for the sacrifice of these ? Most undoubtedly there are, things far more pleasant and desirable. But they are not given to mercenaries, much less to enemies : consequently not to worldlings either, for " whosoever will be a friend of this world becometh an enemy of God " (James iv. 4). It is only to His friends and lovers God communicates His secrets, for to them alone was it said, " All things whatsoever I have heard of My Father I have made known to you " (John xv. 15). Indeed, as the blessed Gregory teaches, love not merely merits but is itself this knowledge.

There are, accordingly, three degrees of divine love, opposed to and exclusive of the three kinds of concupiscence " which are not from the Father." And this explains, as it seems to me, why the Lord put the same question thrice to Peter : " Simon, son of John,

* Sermon XX. on the Canticle of Canticles is on the same subject.

lovest thou Me ? Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me ? Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me ? " (John xxi. 15-17). And perhaps this is also the explanation of the distinctions made in the precept of charity : " Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength " (Deut. vi. 5). That is to say we are commanded to love with tenderness or affection, to love with prudence, and to love with fortitude. For the love of the heart suggests to us something resembling carnal affection, since the affections are said to have their seat in the heart ; to love with the soul implies something more excellent, the soul being regarded as the seat of wisdom, and consequently we may truly say that to love God in this manner is to love Him with prudence ; as for the third prescription of the law : to love with all our strength : that is manifestly a command to love with fortitude.

There can be no doubt that the thought of Christ's incarnation, of His whole life in the flesh, and above all of His most bitter passion, is the most powerful means of exciting that tender affectionate love which I have called the love of the heart. God, seeing men become wholly carnal, has revealed Himself to them in the flesh with such an excess of divine sweetness that even the least sensitive feel drawn to love Him with all their heart. It was His desire to restore the most excellent of His mortal creatures, undone by sin. " But," He said, " if I constrain him to return to Me against his own will, I shall have in My service not a man but an irrational beast of burden : for his obedience will not be voluntary or spontaneous, so that he might say, ' I will freely sacrifice to Thee ' (Ps. liii. 8). Is it for

beasts of burden I have prepared My kingdom ? 'Doth God take care for oxen ? (1 Cor. viii. 9). Therefore, that I may oblige him to render Me voluntary service, I will terrify him with menaces, 'if haply he will turn from his way and live' (Ezech. xxxiii. 11)." And so the Lord threatened His rebellious creature with the most awful chastisements that can be conceived: eternal darkness, undying worms, inextinguishable fire. But finding fear ineffectual to recall man to his duty, He said to Himself: "Man may be influenced not alone by the fear of evil but also by the desire of good. He covets gold and silver and such like objects, but above all these things he longs for life. Nothing can be clearer or more indubitable than this. If then he has so great a love for his miserable, laborious, and transitory life on earth, what shall be his esteem for the life of heaven, reposeful, blissful, everlasting ?" So He gave a promise of eternal life, promised what "eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man" (1 Cor. ii. 9) to conceive.

But hope was found as incapable as fear of converting man to his Maker. Then He said: "One more expedient remains untried. Fear and desire are not the only means by which man may be moved; he can be influenced by love also. Indeed, there is no other passion has such dominion over him." He came to us, accordingly, in visible flesh, and showed Himself so sweet and amiable as to make it abundantly clear to all that "greater love than His no man hath" (John xv. 13), since He even laid down His life for us. Surely he that will not be converted now deserves to hear the reproach: "What is there that I ought to do more to My vineyard that I have not done ?" (Is. v. 4). And

truly, dearest brethren, nowhere else has God given such proof of His love for us as in the mysteries of His incarnation and passion ; nowhere else has His loving-kindness been so clearly manifested, nowhere else His goodness, as in the mysteries of His sacred Humanity. Hence the Apostle writes : " The goodness and kindness of God our Saviour have appeared " (Tit. iii. 4). Yes, my brethren, His goodness and kindness, but not His almighty power : that was hidden, because He came in weakness. This, doubtless, is what made the Prophet Habacuc say : " There His strength is hidden " (Hab. iii. 4), that is, in His Humanity, especially when we behold Him stretched on the cross, whose " horns are in His hands," as the same Prophet remarks (ibid.). Hidden too was His wisdom, concealed from sight under a veil of flesh. For " it pleased God by the foolishness of His Word to save them that believe " (1 Cor. i. 21). Why should I not say that He Who " delivered His Soul to death and hath borne the sins of many " (Is. liii. 12), who " paid back what He took not away " (Ps. lxviii. 5) : why should I not say that One capable of this has made Himself in some sense foolish ? Did He not in truth appear drunk with the wine of charity and quite forgetful of Himself, contrary to Peter's counsel : " Be propitious to Thyself, O Lord " * (Matt. xvi. 22) ? There, then, in the mystery of the incarnation, was His strength hidden, there and still more was His wisdom concealed, wrapt round, so to speak, with a covering of flesh : but His goodness and kindness could nowhere appear to better advantage, be more fully revealed, more sweetly commended.

* " Propitius esto tibi," which translates the Greek : " ἵλεώς σοι." The vulgate has : " absit a te " (far be it from Thee)—(Translator).

Such considerations are well calculated, as I have said, to excite in us the tender and affectionate love of the heart. And you may see people so tenderly devoted to the mysteries of Christ's Humanity that they can never recall them or hear them alluded to without shedding tears. In this kind of charity we have a most excellent remedy for the concupiscence of the flesh. For what carnal pleasure can be pleasing to him who finds so much sweetness in the passion of his Saviour? Nevertheless, this tender affection may easily lead us astray unless it has prudence to guide it: it may easily become a source of danger, and then perhaps we shall find it difficult enough to guard against the poison in our honey. Prudence, therefore, must accompany our love, so that we may be able to scrutinise diligently the hidden heart of these mysteries and thus "be prepared to satisfy everyone that asketh a reason of the hope that is in us" (1 Peter iii. 15). One effect of this prudent love is the expulsion from the mind of all vain curiosity. For he that is preoccupied with such sacred studies can hardly be curious about temporal things, but will rather say with the Prophet, "Oh, how I have loved Thy law, O Lord! it is my meditation all the day" (Ps. cxviii. 97).

The third characteristic our love of God ought to possess is fortitude. As prudence is necessary to prevent our being deceived, so we require fortitude to resist violence and to be ready to suffer everything for justice' sake. Love thus endowed is incompatible with ambition. For surely he that is destined to occupy a throne in heaven will rather despise than ambition the poor honours and kingdoms of earth. Now it is to such as love with fortitude that the kingdom of heaven is pro-

mised. " Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven " (Matt. v. 10).

We may, then, suppose that the triple interrogation of the Apostle Peter concerned the three qualities of perfect love, because his charity had previously been found defective. For when he first heard the Lord speaking of His passion he could not endure it, his love being tender indeed, but without either prudence or fortitude. " Far be this from Thee, O Lord ! " (Matt. xvi. 22), he cried out in the foolishness of his affection. Therefore he deserved to hear the words of reproof : " Go behind Me, Satan, because thou savourest not the things that are of God, but those that are of men (Mark viii. 33). The love of the other apostles must have been similarly defective when the Lord said to them, " If you loved Me you would indeed be glad because I go to the Father " (John xiv. 28). But surely it is because they love Him that they grieve at His going ? Undoubtedly. They love Him, I allow, but in another sense they do not love Him. They love Him with a tender affection, but not with a wise. However, on the night when his Master was betrayed, Peter did love Him both tenderly and prudently, since he said, " Lord, I am ready to go with Thee both to prison and to death " (Luke xxii. 33). But not even then was his love endowed with fortitude, because, as Boethius says :

> " He who falls reveals thereby
> His want of strength to every eye." *

Not yet was he " endued with power from on high "

* " Qui cecidit, stabili non erat ille gradu."—*De Consol. Phil.* i. 1.

(Luke xxiv. 49). When he did receive that promised infusion of heavenly virtue, so far from denying his beloved Lord, he fearlessly confessed Him before the council, saying, " If it be just in the sight of God to hear you rather than God, judge ye " (Acts iv. 19). And, brethren, was it not natural that he to whose charge the flock was to be committed should be interrogated about his love? For none ought to be appointed to rule others, save such as are inebriated with the wine of charity, so that, forgetful of themselves, they may seek not the things that are their own, but the things that are Jesus Christ's (Phil. ii. 21). And observe how Peter, when asked by his Lord, " Lovest thou Me more than these ? " (John xxi. 15), answered simply, " Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee " (ibid.), not daring to prefer himself to the others, as he remembered with confusion to have done before : it was this, apparently, that grieved him (ibid. 17). For on the night of the Last Supper he had proudly said, " Although all shall be scandalised in Thee, I will never be scandalised " (Matt. xxvi. 33).

ON THE MANNER IN WHICH WE MUST PREPARE OURSELVES FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

"Lord, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle? or who shall rest in Thy holy hill? He that entereth without blemish."—Ps. xiv. 1, 2.

Surely, dearest brethren, it is both right and reasonable that they for whom a kingdom has been prepared from the foundation of the world (Matt. xxv. 34) should not neglect to prepare themselves for that kingdom. Otherwise, it may be that, although the royal seats are ready, those shall be accounted unworthy who were destined to sit thereon. So in truth it happened at the wedding feast in the Gospel. For the Lord said on that occasion, "The marriage indeed is ready, but they that were invited were not worthy" (Matt. xxii. 8). Let us inquire, therefore, how they that are called to rule as kings ought to prepare for the kingdom in store for them. And if with the Prophet we piously interrogate the Lord, "Lord, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle? Or who shall rest in Thy holy hill?" we shall doubtless with the same Prophet hear the Lord making answer, "He that entereth without blemish" (Ps. xiv. 1-2). "But," you will say to me, "to prepare in this manner appears proper, because possible, to Christ alone." Such indeed is the case. Amongst all men not another can be found free from stain; no, not even the infant that has lived but a single day upon the earth (Job xiv. 4, 5)* Yes, He alone shall enter the

* See *Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles*, Vol. ii. p. 326. note (Mount Melleray Translation).

heavenly kingdom Who alone is a "Lamb without spot" (Exod. xii. 5), Who alone cannot be "convinced of sin" (John viii. 46), because no sin was ever committed by Him nor could the sin of another be derived to Him. He alone is the true High-Priest Who has contracted no defilement either from His Father or from His Mother, according to the prescriptions of the law (Levit. xxi. 10-11); not from His Father, for His Father is God; not from His Mother, because she is a Virgin. Hence He alone hath entered into the holy of holies (Heb. ix. 12), for "no man hath ascended into heaven but He that descended from heaven, the Son of Man Who is in heaven" (John iii. 13).

But, then, what about ourselves? Ought we to abandon ourselves at once to despair? By no means. For this very truth is itself a motive for confidence, yea, it is the principal ground of our hope. Christ, as I have said, shall enter alone, but He shall enter whole and entire: not a bone of Him shall be lacking (John xix. 36). No, the Head shall not be found in the kingdom without the members, provided the members be conformed and conjoined to the Head: conformed in their dispositions and conduct, conjoined by their faith. Even the new-born infant has such conformity and conjunction with Christ as he is capable of, whilst in the triple immersion of the sacrament of regeneration he is "planted in the likeness of His death" (Rom. vi. 5), and the gift of faith, which he cannot as yet receive in a fully developed form, is given to him in germ and wrapped up, so to speak, in the grace of the sacrament. "For the Spirit of wisdom is benevolent" (Wisdom i. 6), and those who are bound by a borrowed sin He allows to be delivered by an equally borrowed

justice. But thereafter He will not so easily acquit him that is cursed by his own lips * (ibid.). "For if we sin wilfully after having the knowledge of the truth, there is now left no sacrifice for sins" (Heb. x. 26). No, the Spirit of wisdom will not acquit him that is cursed by his own in the same way as him that is cursed by the mouth of another. A curse, as you know, my brethren, is a grievous stain; and you know also that "it is not what goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but what cometh out of his mouth" (Matt. xv. 11). The defilement, consequently, comes from the same source as the malediction, that is, from one's lips, although not always from one's *own* individual lips. For it is not from his own individual body or his own individual mind that the curse of original sin comes to the infant, in whom as yet there can be no feeling of concupiscence, much less consent. But wherefore does the Spirit refuse to acquit him that is cursed by his own lips, and wherefore is there left no sacrifice for sin to the wilful sinner, unless because Christ cannot be crucified a second time for the sake of him who is already "planted in the likeness of His death" by the sacrament of baptism? Henceforth he must use the water of his own tears to wash away the soil of his sins, he must carry his own cross (Matt. x. 38), he must mortify his own members (Col. iii. 5), he must immolate his own victim (Rom. xii. 1). Otherwise it will be of no profit to him to recite the creed.† The curse of his own lips can only be expiated by "the labour of his own lips" (Ps. cxxxix. 10). For "through many tribulations we must enter

* "Maledictum." The Vulgate reading is "maledicum," corresponding to the Greek, "βλάσφημον."—(Translator.)

† That is, faith alone, without the works of penance, will not now suffice to save him.—(Translator.)

into the kingdom of God" (Acts xiv. 21). Without tribulations, therefore, endured either by oneself or by Another, no one is admitted to the mansions of the blessed.

The tribulation of the second Adam suffices alone to cleanse such as have only been defiled by the transgression of the first Adam. I do not mean of course that our own satisfaction can of itself avail anything. For what is the intrinsic value of all the penance we can do? Nevertheless, if we do not suffer with Christ, we shall not reign with Him (Rom. viii. 17). He will supply that which is wanting to us. But He will not allow us to withhold our own contribution, howsoever insignificant it may be.

But, my brethren, if adhesion to the Redeemer by orthodox faith without conformity of life will not avail to save the adult, much less shall he be saved by works without faith. And it is easier to put right a deformed member that remains in union with its Head than to reunite a severed member, no matter how closely conformed. Nevertheless, the deformed member must either be made conformable to the image of the Son of God (Rom. viii. 29) and to its Head or else be cut off at last and "be an anathema from Christ" (Rom. ix. 3): lest otherwise the fulness of His mystical body should be found to contain something unworthy.

Consequently, where the sin is personal, personal also is the purgation required to be, and justly. And if the defilement be manifold, equally manifold must be the tribulation. For whence arises such tribulation but from resistance to corruption, from opposition to passion? Now let me ask you: what is there in man entirely pure from this stain, entirely free from this plague

of concupiscence? The deadly virus has its source within. It issues from the heart and diffuses itself through every part of the body, flattering the flesh with its poisonous pleasures and corrupting the will with unworthy desires. Hence that prurience of the ears (2 Tim. iv. 3), that curiosity of the eyes, that craving for sweet perfumes, that inordinate appetite for the pleasures of the palate, that effeminate and most perilous longing for the gratification of the sense of touch diffused through the whole body, that internal intoxication of carnal desires, and that mighty furnace in the heart, fiercely inflamed with the passions of ambition, of avarice, of envy, of pride, of sensuality, and with all the other vices. Now as many as are the pleasures of concupiscence, as many as are the delights wherewith this world attempts to seduce us, so many are the tribulations which the just man must suffer, so many the temptations he is obliged to support. And whereas he that "walketh according to the flesh" (Rom. viii. 1) seeks his happiness in the pleasures of sense "and counteth it delightful to be under the briers" (Job xxx. 7): every one that desires on the contrary to "sow in the spirit" (Gal. vi. 8), far from cultivating the "thorns and thistles" (Gen. iii. 18) which spring forth out of his own proper earth in virtue of the primeval malediction, endeavours rather to root them up. For, like the Psalmist, he is turned in his anguish as often as the thorn pierces (Ps. xxxi. 4).

How great, then, dearest brethren, and how manifold the tribulation implied in resistance to this multifarious pest in all its manifestations! "From the sole of the foot even unto the top of the head there is no soundness" in me (Is. i. 6). The poison of concupiscence has

corrupted my whole being. "I see another law in all my members fighting against the law of my mind" (Rom. vii. 23). From every side "death" is endeavouring to "come in through my windows" (Jer. ix. 21), whilst within the fire of every evil passion is raging for my ruin and cruelly oppressing me. Nevertheless, although encompassed by so many dangers, I must not lose heart or yield to despair: "for as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so also by Christ doth our comfort abound" (2 Cor. i. 5). Wouldst thou like to know, my brother, what that comfort is? I will tell thee. "Sin is present at thy door" (Gen. iv. 7) in truth: but unless thou dost voluntarily open the door, it shall never enter. The appetite for evil is stirring in thy heart: but that "lust is under thee and thou hast dominion over it" (ibid.); it has no power to harm thee so long as thou refusest consent. Here is another comfort. Keep thy passions from overcoming thee by withholding consent to their enticements, "and then thou shalt be without spot" (Ps. xviii. 14); and therefore, being thus free from blemish, thou also shalt enter to dwell in the tabernacle of the Lord thy God and to rest in His holy hill. For "if they shall have no dominion over thee," the Psalmist gives assurance that "thou shalt be without spot, and shalt be cleansed from the greatest sin" (Ps. xviii. 14). And truly that deserves to be called the greatest sin which with its poison occupies a man wholly, both within and without. There is yet another comfort. "In six tribulations He—the Lord—shall deliver thee," says holy Job, "and in the seventh, evil shall not touch thee" (Job v. 19). If thou art a true Hebrew, thou shalt serve for six years but in the seventh year thou shalt go forth in freedom

(Deut. xv. 12). Thou shalt have to endure six tribulations in resisting the desires of thy heart and the appetite for pleasure experienced in the fivefold sensibility of the flesh ; but through these six thou shalt be delivered from the seventh, not indeed so that it shall not come nigh thee, but in the sense that it shall not have power to harm thee, that its evil shall not touch thee. Yes, death will doubtless come to thee—for that is the seventh tribulation—but it shall be as " sleep to God's beloved, and behold the inheritance of the Lord ! " (Ps. cxxvi. 2-3). It shall be as the portal of life, it shall be as the entrance into refreshment, it shall be as a short and easy way to the summit of the holy hill, and as the approach " to the place of the wonderful tabernacle " (Ps. xl. 1, 5), set up not by the hand of man but by God. Accordingly, evil shall not touch thee in the seventh tribulation. But a threefold evil lies there in wait for those who now neglect to purify themselves perfectly in the six tribulations preceding, who are not at pains to cleanse themselves thoroughly in these " six water-pots " (John ii. 6), so that they may appear at the marriage-feast of the Heavenly Bridegroom " not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing " (Ephes. v. 27). For they shall experience horror at the parting, pain in the passage, and confusion before the face " of the glory of the great God " (Tit. ii. 13).

Dearest brethren, why should we shut our eyes to the reality of things ? Wherefore this sloth, so full of peril, in which our lives are consumed, and this accursed pretence of security ? Miserable men that we are, how long shall we deceive ourselves ? Perchance we are made rich already—perchance we already reign ? (1 Cor. iv. 8). Alas for us ! Is it not the truth that the horrid spirits

of darkness lie in wait at the doors of our houses? that those hellish spectres stand ready to attack us at our exit? Oh, what then shall thy terror be, O my soul, when, parting from all whose presence was so sweet to thee, whom it was such a delight to behold, such a happiness to dwell with, and entering alone upon a land entirely strange to thee, thou shalt see those most hideous monsters rushing to meet thee in multitudes! Oh, who shall succour thee in that thine hour of sorest need? Who shall protect thee from the "lions roaring and ready for their prey" (Eccles. li. 4)? "Who shall comfort thee?" (Is. li. 19). Who shall guide thee safe? My little children, let us remember these the last things of our course so that we may never sin (Eccles. vii. 40). We must also pass through fire, and that "fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is" (1 Cor. iii. 13). There shall our "silver be turned into dross" (Is. i. 22); there shall our evil be all brought to light; there shall Truth, "taking the time" which we have now and neglect to put to profit, "judge justices" (Ps. lxxiv. 3). And under that scrutiny, how shall all our justices appear save as so many filthy rags? (Is. lxiv. 6). With what excruciating torment shall those vindictive flames consume the daily faults which we now pass over as not worth considering, which our self-love hides from us, which through sloth we refuse to amend! Oh, "who will give water to my head and a fountain of tears to my eyes" (Jer. ix. 1) that I may now bewail my transgressions? For then, perhaps, all my stains being washed out, no fuel shall be found for that devouring fire to feed upon.

What think you, brethren? Will anything at all of our good works remain to us after that fiery ordeal?

Or will the unconsumed residue be so considerable that we may venture to offer it to the Divine Majesty and, laden therewith, to present ourselves before Him? Oh, what then shall be our shame, what then our confusion, to appear in the presence of the Lord our God, so lukewarm, so imperfect, so empty-handed, after receiving from Him such a multitude of most precious favours! Adam, on account of the one offence of tasting the forbidden apple, fled away, seeking to hide himself from the face of the Lord: what then ought we to do after so many crimes, so many abominations? When shall the eyes of our heart be so perfectly cured of their present dimness—which we are now neglecting to remedy—that they shall be able to support undazzled the incomparable splendours of the Divine Sun of Justice? Alas! "As wax melteth before the fire, so shall the wicked perish at the presence of God" (Ps. lxvii. 2). Therefore, "let rottenness enter my bones and swarm under me, that so I may rest in the day of tribulation" (Heb. iii. 16), in the day, that is, of the seventh tribulation, and that in it no evil may touch me! This is all I ask: to escape on that day the threefold evil of horror, pain, and confusion. Happy the soul that can confidently speak to her enemies in the gate! (Ps. cxxvi. 5)—that at the portal of eternity can thus address the demon: "What dost thou here, cruel beast? Thou shalt find in me nothing that is thine." * Happier the soul whose works shall not burn and who shall be proved by the test to have built not with "wood, hay, or stubble," but with "gold, silver, and precious stones" (1 Cor. iii. 12-15). But happiest he of

* From the life of St. Martin of Tours by Simplicius Severus. —(Translator.)

all who, "beholding the glory of the Lord with open face," without any obstructing cloud of confusion, shall be "transformed into the same image" (2 Cor. iii. 18) and shall be made like to Him, because seeing Him as He is (1 John iii. 2), that is, as God over all things "and worthy to be praised and glorified and exalted above all for ever" (Dan. iii. 2). Amen.

ON THOSE IN WHOM THE MYSTERIES OF CHRIST ARE NOT YET FULFILLED.

"*Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ*"—Rom. xiii. 14.

Everything that we read of the Saviour, most dearly beloved, is a remedy for some malady of our souls. Let us see to it, therefore, that we may never deserve to have the reproach of the Prophet addressed to ourselves: "We would have cured Babylon but she is not healed" (Jer. li. 9). Let each one of us consider what effect has been produced in his soul by the powerful spiritual medicaments provided. For not in all do the salutary mysteries of the Incarnate Word bring about the results intended. There are some for whom Christ is not yet born, if I may so speak, and some for whom He has not yet suffered, and some for whom He has not yet arisen, and some for whom He has not yet ascended, and some finally upon whom He has not yet sent down the Holy Spirit. For what sign of the lowliness of the infant Christ, of Him "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant" (Phil. ii. 6-7): what sign, I ask, of the humility of the newborn God can you discover in a proud mortal? What trace of His lowliness is visible in those who still pursue with all the ardour of desire the honours and wealth of this world? Dearest brethren, are not your souls replenished at this moment with heavenly joy, forasmuch as you at least can say with truth, "The Child is born for us" (Is. ix. 6)?

There are others, as I have said, for whom Christ has not yet suffered : those, namely, who try to shirk labour, who are still terrified at the thought of death, as if forsooth He had not vanquished labour and death by His patient endurance of both the one and the other. And there are some for whom Christ has not yet arisen from the dead. I mean such as pass their whole time in the labour and the distress and the affliction of penance, " being put to death all the day long " (Rom. viii. 36), without having received as yet any spiritual consolation. But, brethren, " unless those days had been shortened " (Matt. xxiv. 22) who would have the strength to endure such a yoke ? Others there are for whom Christ has arisen indeed, but not yet ascended—for whom He still sojourns on earth with all the sweetness of paschal joys. These are they that appear always full of fervour and devotion, weeping at their prayers, sending up sighs of love and burning desire at their meditations, discovering in everything a fountain of sweetness and delight, and singing festive alleluias without intermission during all this happy season. The day will come, however, when it shall be necessary to deprive them of such spiritual milk in order that they may learn how to live upon more solid food (1 Cor. iii. 2),—when it shall be expedient for them that Christ should go (John xvi. 7), and that this sensible devotion should be withdrawn. But how will they be able to comprehend this truth ? They will rather complain of being deserted by their Lord and of being deprived of the consolation of His grace. However, let them wait a little while, let them remain in the holy city until they be endued with a more powerful virtue from on high (Luke xxiv. 49) and replenished with the more precious gifts and graces

of the Holy Ghost. It was in this way the apostles were lifted up to a higher degree of grace and charity, so that they were no longer concerned about weeping over their woes, but only as to how they might gain a glorious victory over the common enemy and trample Satan under their feet (Rom. xvi. 20). Amen.

ON THE IMMUNITY OF THE BLESSED FROM PAIN AND SORROW.

"*Sitting by the shore, they chose out the good fishes into vessels but the bad they cast forth*"—Matt. xiii. 48.

I am a little afraid, my brethren, that what you had read to you yesterday may have left a false impression on the minds of some. I mean the passage cited from Origen's Commentary on Leviticus, on that verse, namely, where Aaron and his sons are forbidden to drink wine when about to officiate at the altar (Lev. x. 9). For taken simply and in the obvious sense of the words, that passage is capable of misleading. "My Saviour," so speaks the Commentator, "sorrows even now over my sins; and He shall continue in grief so long as I continue in transgression." And he says a great deal more to the same effect in a style less cautious than abundant, less sober than elegant. From the murmur I hear I gather that many amongst you do not need to be put upon their guard against this author. I know that those who are learned in the law only smile at his extravagances. Nevertheless, I acknowledge myself "a debtor to the wise and to the unwise" (Rom. i. 14). And, mind you, I am not going to inquire as to what meaning Origen himself attached to his words. It is quite possible that he meant them to be taken metaphorically. That is his own affair: it does not particularly concern us. Yet this much I feel bound to say: that on the testimony of the holy fathers the same writer has put forward views manifestly opposed to the orthodox faith, and hence is not to be read without

caution.* But, as already remarked, my present purpose has nothing to do with Origen's own beliefs or intentions. I only desire to make sure that you who have the true faith shall not be influenced in the least by the authority of his words.

Far be it from us to believe that there is any room for sadness in heaven where there is no room for sin! There can be no grief in that happy place because there can be no transgression. So on earth pain was unknown until iniquity required it. No, my brethren, in heaven there is nothing but justice, nothing but joy, just as in hell there is only sin and the penalty thereof. But here in this middle place we find all those things mingled together, and consequently none of them perfectly pure. We have all to suffer here in many things, because "in many things we all offend" (James iii. 2). It was because in heaven there could be no room for suffering or sorrow that the Only-Begotten of the Father, destined to redeem us by His passion, just as He assumed a passible nature since He could not suffer in His Divine, so "was He seen upon earth and conversed with men" (Bar. iii. 38), in order that he might "humble Himself in the place of affliction" (Ps. xliii. 20). Here, therefore, He vouchsafed to trouble Himself (John xi. 33), here "He began to fear and to be heavy" (Mark xiv. 33), here He was "tempted in all things like as we are, without sin" (Heb. iv. 15). On earth, I say, the Lord Jesus truly wept, truly sorrowed, truly suffered, truly died, was truly buried. But now He is arisen, and "the former things have passed away" (Apoc. xxi. 4). No longer, therefore, seek thy Beloved in thy "little

* For an account of the writings and errors of Origen, see *Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles*, Vol. II., p. 117. note (Mount Melleray Translation).

bed" : "He is risen, He is not there" (Mark xvi. 6). Hear what the spouse says : "In my little bed by night I sought Him Whom my soul loveth ; I sought Him and I found Him not" (Cant. iii. 1). It was Mary Magdalen that sought the Lord in the narrow couch, she sought Him in the tomb, but failed to find Him. Rather was she found herself by the watchmen (ibid.) who said to her, "why seekest thou the living with the dead ?" (Luke xxiv. 5). He was indeed once with the dead, but is with them now no longer ; He was for a while "amongst the dead," but even then as "free" (Ps. lxxxvii. 6). For He freely "troubled Himself," He freely laid down His life (John x. 17) : "He was offered because it was His own will" (Is. liii. 7). In a word, all His infirmities were of his own choice, not submitted to out of necessity. And this is what made the Apostle say, "The weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Cor. i. 25) ; because even in the days of His mortality, He was great amongst the little, mighty amongst the weak, "free amongst the dead."

It might indeed be said, and not without reason, that even in our own tribulations there is sometimes a certain degree of liberty. That is, when out of a free and liberal affection of charity we do penance for the sins of our neighbour, weep over them, fast for them, endure hard stripes for them, "paying back what we took not away" (Ps. lxviii. 5). It was in this sense, as I suppose, that St. Paul said, "whereas I was free as to all, I made myself the servant of all" (1 Cor. ix. 19). But what is such liberty as compared with that of Him Who had no sin of His own to expiate, on Whom death had no claim, Who merited no tribulation ? For although our voluntary sufferings are in truth free and voluntary with re-

gard to our neighbour, who has no strict right to demand them, they are nevertheless due to God and by Him are required from us. And if it should seem that we render our neighbour more than is due to him, we must remember that no creature can ever discharge his whole debt to God. " But to me," says the Apostle, " it is a very small thing to be judged by you or by man's day : but neither do I judge my own self " (1 Cor. iv. 3). But consider what he says in another passage, " If we would judge ourselves we should not be judged " (1 Cor. xi. 31) ; and again, " The spiritual man judgeth all things " (1 Cor. ii. 15). Note how he does not here employ the word " judicare " but " dijudicare " which signifies to discern and approve. So in his Epistle to the Romans he says, " Blessed is he that judgeth not himself in that which he approveth " (Rom. xiv. 22). Accordingly, it was " a very small thing " to him to be judged by those from whom, as he was well aware, he had " kept back nothing " (Acts xx. 20) of his bounden service, whom he had in nowise injured, but rather " became all things to all " (1 Cor. ix. 22), so that he could say boldly and with a secure conscience, " Who is weak and I am not weak ? Who is scandalised and I am not on fire ? " (2 Cor. xi. 29). For " he became to the Jews a Jew that he might gain the Jews " and " to them that were without the law as if he were without the law that he might gain them that were without the law " (1 Cor. ix. 20-21). That is how he " became all things to all men that he might save all." Rightly, therefore, did he account it " a very small thing to be judged " by them amongst whom, so far from giving cause for offence, he had with such unselfishness " honoured his ministry " (Rom. xi. 13). But neither did he judge

himself in that which he approved. For to himself also he dispensed without fraud what he owed to himself: chastisement to his body (1 Cor. ix. 27), pity to his soul (Ecclus. xxx. 24), all vigilant solicitude to his heart (Prov. iv. 23), so that in this respect too he was conscious of nothing: "Yet," he says, "am I not hereby justified: but He That judgeth me is the Lord" (1 Cor. iv. 4), Whose judgment I cannot possibly escape. "And if I be wicked woe unto me, and if just I shall not lift up my head" (Job x. 15), because "all our justices shall appear as a filthy rag" (Is. lxiv. 6) before Him. For "in Thy sight, O Lord, no man living shall be justified" (Ps. cxlii. 2), with one sole exception (Ps. xiii. 1).

Yes, my brethren, there is only One in the whole human family who is not obliged to confess to God, "I have sinned against Thee" (Ps. l. 6).* And blessed he that can say with the Psalmist, "against Thee alone" (ibid.). Christ alone was perfectly "free amongst the dead," "Who did no sin" (1 Peter ii. 22) and Whose "justice is as the mountains of God" (Ps. xxxv. 7). But now He is no longer amongst the dead. He has been

* That is to say, Christ alone was immune from sin, not by grace or privilege but by natural right, and not alone was He sinless, but absolutely impeccable (Hurter, *Theol. Dogm.* ii. 462). The Blessed Virgin, on the other hand, owed her preservation from all sin, both original and actual, to the gratuitous grace of God. According to the more common opinion amongst Catholic divines, she was included in the proximate debt of contracting original sin, that is, she was included in the quasi pact entered into between God and Adam, in virtue of which transgression on the part of the latter would cause all his posterity to be conceived in the state of sin, unless God, of His pure mercy, chose to interfere. In this sense, according to Suarez, Mary can be said to have sinned in Adam. (D. iii. s.2.). For St. Bernard's attitude towards the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, see *Sermons on the Canticle*, vol. i. 253–4, ii. 429—(Mount Mellerary Translation).

taken up, and changed in Body, changed likewise in Heart, He has " entered into the powers of the Lord " (Ps. lxx. 15). There, putting off all the weakness of His mortality, laying aside, that is, those " filthy garments " wherewith He appeared clothed long ago to the Prophet Zachary (Zach. iii. 3), He is at last attired in the garments of His glory and says to the Father what we read in the psalm : " Thou has cut my sackcloth and hast compassed Me with gladness " (Ps. xxix. 12). He took upon Himself, indeed, the true substance and nature of a human body and a human soul, and was liable, consequently, to all the pains and afflictions incidental to both. But now He is glorified in Soul and in Body. And it appears to me that the Prophet comprehends the two glorifications in one short verse of the psalm where he says, " The Lord hath reigned, He is clothed with beauty ; the Lord is clothed with strength " (Ps. xcii. 1). That is to say, He has put on beauty in the brightness of His Body, and strength in the henceforward imperturbable peace of His Soul. " My Soul is sorrowful even unto death—" said He to His apostles (Matt. xxiv. 38), insinuating that with death all His sorrows would cease. And in reference to this fact may be understood the last words He uttered, when, being about to expire, He bent His head and exclaimed, " It is consummated " (John xix. 30).

But listen to Origen " If the Apostle of Christ," so he argues, " mourns for some ' that sinned before and did not do penance for the evils that they committed ' (2 Cor. xii. 21), what shall I say of Him Who is called the Son of Charity ? " And again : " If, therefore, He sought our interests whilst He lived here below, how can it be supposed that He does not now seek our-

selves, that He does not concern Himself about our affairs, that He does not grieve over our offences, that He does not lament our losses and bewail our afflictions, He Who wept over Jerusalem ?" "Yes, even now," he writes in another place, "'the compassionate and merciful Lord' (Ps. cii. 8), 'weeps with them that weep' (Rom. xii. 15) and 'mourns with them that sinned before' with a far greater affection of charity than the Apostle. For surely we are not to believe that whilst Paul weeps and laments over the blindness of sinners, the Lord Himself restrains His tears." If we understand these words in their obvious sense, does it not seem, my brethren, as if we saw the spouse of the Canticle still seeking for her Beloved in her little bed ? (Cant. iii. 1). One that is himself dead cannot seek outside the tomb for Him Whom his soul loveth, nor one that is sick outside his couch, nor a little one outside his little bed. But the Beloved is now glorified as well in mind as in body, as I have already remarked ; yea, more in mind than in body, in proportion as the spirit is more capable of glory than the flesh. Consequently it is no longer in His power to weep for His own, any more than it is in His power to forget them. But how can our human infirmity comprehend an affection of this kind, which pities without pain, and is full of love, and tenderest love, for all in affliction and danger, yet without experiencing in itself the very slightest feeling of sorrow or agitation ? It is assuredly something far beyond our experience, yet nothing is impossible to God (Luke i. 37). He is able not only to have Himself, but to communicate to His friends also,—those, I mean, whom He has finally set free from the infirmities of the flesh, indued with heavenly virtues and introduced into the

powers of the Lord (Ps. lxx. 15)—such charity as can "rejoice with them that rejoice and weep with them that weep" (Rom. xii. 15) and unite itself most firmly and tenderly to those whom it loves, yet so that it never suffers the loss of its tranquillity. Now there can be no doubt that this is the most excellent kind of love. So do we esteem a cataplasm which heals wounds without any diminution of its virtue or substance—if indeed there be any such—as far more precious than those that are exhausted or corrupted in the use. Therefore, although the Lord Jesus wept once over Jerusalem, He shall henceforth weep no longer: just as He was dead once, but "rising again from the dead, He dieth now no more" (Rom. vi. 9): just as He once reposed in His "little bed," but having arisen thence, He shall never again be found there.

Nevertheless, even now His Heart is filled with a love infinitely stronger and more efficacious than is that of those who weep for transgressors or even lay down their lives for their brethren: neither of which is any longer possible to Him, since His work has been consummated. Yea, and if such things are possible to us, that belongs not to our strength but to our infirmity. For our nets are still being drawn through the sea "and gathering together all kinds of fishes" (Matt. xiii. 47) without any distinction. But the Lord Jesus, and not He alone, but His apostles also and the other saints besides who now share His glory: these have all reached the shore where, sorting the fishes, "they chose out the good into vessels, but the bad they cast forth" (ibid. 48). As for me, how many bad fishes am I not obliged to drag about with me so long as I live here below! What a number of the unprofitable

fishes of anxiety and worry are gathered into my net by my affection for you! Let me see. I rejoice over such as make progress. A pleasant emotion that and a good fish. But I have to grieve also on account of the backsliders, "I weep with them that weep," I am filled with anxious solicitude for those in danger. I am weak with the weak, and when anyone is scandalised I am on fire (2 Cor. xi. 29). These are all bitter and painful feelings; they are the bad fish,—bad, not because of guilt, but by reason of the trouble and disquiet they produce. God grant that the multitude of such bad fishes enclosed in our nets may not be the means of submerging us in "pusillanimity of spirit and the storm" (Ps. liv. 9), until we come to rest at the longed-for shore, where the good fish shall be finally separated from the bad! Thereafter "death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more" (Apoc. xxi. 4), neither shall fear have access to our confines, but only "joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of praise" (Is. li. 3). Amen.

ON THE FIVE PLACES OF SPIRITUAL TRAFFIC.

" A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. And calling his servants, he gave them ten pounds, and said to them : Trade till I come " —Luke xix. 12, 13.

Dearest brethren, the Word of God, " the Only-Begotten of the Father " (John i. 14), " the Sun of justice " (Mal. iv. 2), that Divine Merchan thas come down from the loftiest heights of heaven, bringing with Him the price of our redemption. " A faithful commerce " * this and most worthy of all acceptation (1 Tim. i. 15), in which He Who is the King's own Son and Himself the King (Ps. lxxi. 2) is made matter of traffic, purest gold is bartered for lead, the Just and Holy One sacrificed for sinners ! Oh, what an unmerited mercy ! What a resplendent proof of gratuitous love ! What an unhoped for condescension ! What an astonishing marvel of divine sweetness ! What a prodigy of unconquerable goodness ! And besides, what a bottomless abyss of humility opens to our view in this strange commerce : the Son of God delivered up for a slave, the Creator done to death for His creature, the Lord supreme condemned to expiate the crime of a miserable bondsman ! This is Thy work, O Christ, Who didst descend from the brightness of Thy heavenly home to the blackness of hell, from Thy

* The Church herself, in the office for the feast of Circumcision, speaks of the Incarnation as a holy commerce : " O admirabile commercium ! Creator generis humani, animatum corpus sumens, de Virgine nasci dignatus est "—First Antiphon of Vespers.—(Translator).

luminous throne of majesty at the Father's right hand to the poverty and wretchedness of our humanity, from the glory of the Godhead to the ignominy of the cross, bringing light to the regions of darkness, bringing salvation to man, and vanquishing both death and its author, the devil! It was Thou alone (for none other could be found) Whom to redeem us Thine own native goodness invited, Thy mercy urged, Thy fidelity to the promises Thou hadst given compelled: Thou Who wast received into the spotlessly pure womb of the Virgin and drawn thence with power omnipotent without prejudice to her integrity, Who wast directed in all Thy ways by obedience, fortified by patience, made manifest by charity in Thy miracles and words. Depart from me, ye merchants of Theman! (Bar. iii. 23). Away with you also, ye children of Agar who search after prudence! (ibid.). Nor will I have aught to do with "the giants, those renowned men that were from the beginning, of mighty stature, and expert in war" (ibid. 26). For "the Lord chose not them, neither did they find the way of knowledge, and therefore did they perish" (ibid. 27). For Thou, O Lord, "hast hid these things from the wise and the prudent," yea from the "giants" and "men of renown," those, namely, who appear great in their own conceit, "and hast revealed them to little ones" (Matt. xi. 25. But gladly do I embrace this commerce of Thine, because it is mine also. My soul is replenished with unspeakable delight as often as I meditate upon it. And not alone do I meditate upon it, but I keep the thought of it constantly in my mind because I love what it reveals to me and can never lose sight of the object of my predilection. Thou hast commanded that my soul should be occupied with these

things (1 Tim. iv. 16), in order that she may be " like the merchant's ship, bringing her bread from afar " (Prov. xxxi. 14). Yes, Lord, I will trade till Thou comest (Luke xix. 13) so as to be able to meet Thee with joy. And would to God I deserved to hear Thy gladdening commendation : " Well done, thou good and faithful servant " (ibid. 17) ! " Thine are the heavens and Thine is the earth " (Ps. lxxxviii. 12) ; and in all the regions subject to Thy rule I will trade without fear, having Thee alone as the Guide of my way, my Defender in peril, my Companion in tribulation (Ps. xc. 15).

Five in number are these regions of Thine where Thy merchants travel in pursuit of profit for Thee, where Thy beloved ones seek Thee, where Thy chosen find Thee. The first region is the region of dissimilitude. That noble creature who was fashioned in the region of similitude, being made to the image and likeness of God, " when he was in honour did not understand " (Ps. xlviii. 15) and by sinning put aside his resemblance to his Maker. Oh, my brethren, what a change was that ! From paradise to hell, from an angel to a beast, from God to the devil ! Accursed change ! turning glory into misery, life into death, and peace into war and perpetual captivity. Miserable descent ! from affluence to poverty, from freedom to servitude, from rest to labour. Alas for us, so unhappy in our lot, so wretched in our origin ! For it is our doom to be born in sorrow, to live in labour and to die in pain. The sinful children of sinful parents, born to an inheritance of death, corruption, and slavery—such are we and such shall be our offspring : " a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a wicked seed, a godless generation, growing in

transgression" (Is. i. 4, 5). Lo, before the Lord "we are as if we had no being at all, and are counted to Him as nothing and vanity" (Is. xl. 17). "As nothing," observe, whereas we think we are something, deceiving ourselves (Gal. vi. 13). We are wounded at our entrance into the world, we are wounded whilst we live in the world, we are wounded at our departure out of the world: "from the sole of the foot unto the top of the head there is no soundness" (Is. i. 6) in us. This was well known to that illustrious Prophet who, deploring the miserable condition of the human race, gave expression to his feelings in the following terms: "Great labour is created for all men, and a heavy yoke is upon the children of Adam from the day of their coming out of their mother's womb unto the day of their burial into the mother of all" (Ecclus. xl. 1).

What kind of commerce wouldst Thou have us engage in, O Lord our God, in this region of dissimilitude? I see the whole human race, from the rising to the setting of the sun, busily occupied with this world's traffic: some seeking wealth, others pursuing honours, still others carried away by the love of popularity. But what shall I say of the wealth thus sought after? Is it not something that can only be acquired with labour, possessed with anxiety, lost with pain? "Man storeth up, and he knoweth not for whom he shall gather these things" (Ps. xxxviii. 7). Behold, O man, what labour thou endurest for the sake of perishable riches. To obtain them, thou who, according to one of the wise, art but distant from death by the breadth of three fingers, wilt cross the seas and traverse new worlds. Thou wilt exile thyself from thy native land, thou wilt abandon thy parents, thou wilt desert

even thy wife and children and sunder all the ties of friendship, endeavouring to acquire what one day thou shalt certainly lose and losing shall lament. "O ye sons of men, how long will you be dull of heart? Why do you love vanity and seek after lying?" (Ps. iv. 3). What strange madness is this that possesses you, unhappy offspring of Adam? Exploring all lands and seas, flying to the bounds of the universe, "in many labours, in frequent watchings, in much fasting, in deaths often" (2 Cor. vi. 5, xi. 23): and all for vanity! See now what is the worth of these earthly riches.

Let us next consider the subject of earthly honours. Hast thou attained to high rank? Have they appointed thee prince and ruler? Alas, thou art but exposed on high to be scrutinised by all, to be judged by all, to be wounded by all! Dost thou belong to the military profession? Thou must keep night-watch at the door of thy master as the only means to promotion, where, clad in iron, thou art not so near to rewards as to dangers, to honours as to wounds, to life as to death. Perhaps thou art numbered with the inheritance of the Lord? (Deut. xviii. 2). But have not bishops to stand in awe of the Roman Pontiff, and archdeacons and deacons of their bishop? See to it also whether thou hast "shaken thy hands free from all bribes" (Is. xxxiii. 15), for otherwise to thee as to Simon it shall be said, "Thou hast no part nor lot in this matter, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money" (Acts viii. 20-21). But it is not for me to judge the rulers of the Church. Let them who are supposed to be "the friends of the Bridegroom" (John iii. 29) consider what they shall answer when He who "judgeth the world in equity" (Ps. ix. 9) calls them to

account for their treatment of His Bride. You perceive, then, my brethren, that earthly honours are always a source of anxiety, authority of pain, and eminent station of vanity. And so much for this.

The third object of human endeavour is earthly glory. How shall I speak of this? O child of Adam, what hast thou to do with glory, filthy dust that thou art, "slime of the earth" (Gen. ii. 7), a "vessel unto dishonour" (2 Tim. ii. 20)? Not to thee, not to thee, but to the name of Lord is glory due (Ps. cxiii. 9). Give glory to Him Who is glorious in His saints, and praise to Him Whom the angels praise in the highest (Luke ii. 14). The glory that belongs to God has nothing in common with human vainglory, which is only an idle wind that flatters the ear and the possession of which makes one the object of envy. Consider those whom thou hast outshone, and be sure that thy success has sown the seeds of envy in the heart of every one of them. All, therefore, look upon thee with angry eyes, thy prosperity is a torment to them, thy glory makes them pine away. See, then, that what renders thee glorious renders thee hateful, that what exalts thee humbles thee, that what gives thee security gives thee at the same time cause for uneasiness. Observe also that one cannot walk the ways of glory without falling upon envy, and that earthly happiness contains in itself the germs of corruption and misery. Good reason, therefore, had the Prophet to say, "Surely in vain is every man disquieted" (Ps. xxxviii. 12) about objects of such little worth, the merchandise that is found in this region of dissimilitude. And what will the prudent merchant do when he beholds how earthly riches involve labour, earthly honours pain, and earthly glory envy? Doubtless, he will fill his

wallet with contempt of the world and hasten away.

The second of our regions is the paradise of the cloister. The cloister, my brethren, is truly a paradise, a city surrounded and defended with a wall of discipline, containing a boundless superabundance of most precious commodities. What a glorious thing it is to see " men of one manner dwell together in a house " (Ps. lxvii. 7) ! " How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity " (Ps. cxxxii. 1). There you may behold one bewailing his sins, another rejoicing in the praises of God, another ministering to the necessities of his brethren, still another instructing the ignorant ; this one praying or reading or employed in some work of mercy or penance ; that one inflamed with the fire of charity or making himself " an abject in the house of God " (Ps. lxxxiii. 11), humble in prosperity, cheerful in adversity ; these assiduous in labour, those absorbed in divine contemplation ; so that you feel obliged to exclaim with the Patriarch, " This is the Camp of the Lord " (Gen. xxxii. 2), " How terrible is this place ! This is no other but the house of God and the gate of heaven " (Gen. xxviii. 17). O faithful soul, what is it that ought to engage thine attention in this place of spiritual traffic ? Take note of the virtues practised by them that dwell in the house of " the Lord of virtues " (Ps. xxiii. 10), and with these fill thy wallet for the regulation of thy life. Thou that hast lived hitherto in " the region of the shadow of death " (Is. ix. 2), pass out therefrom into the region of life and truth.

The third region is the region of expiation. As you know, my brethren, there are three places appointed to receive the souls of the dead, according to the variety

of their merits : hell, purgatory, and heaven. Hell is the abode of the damned, purgatory of the just that still need to be purified, heaven of the just made perfect. For the inhabitants of hell there is no longer any hope, because out of hell there is no redemption. Those in purgatory look forward to the day of their deliverance, when they shall have expiated their faults either amid the ardours of intolerable heat, or amid the rigours of extreme cold, or by some other kind of grievous torment. As for the souls in heaven, they rejoice with joy in the vision of God, brothers of Christ by nature, His co-heirs in glory (Rom. viii. 17) sharing with Him an eternity of bliss. As the first class, therefore, are unworthy of consolation and the third have no need of it, it remains for us to turn with compassion to those in the middle state, as to the afflicted brothers of our flesh. Yes, I will enter this region of suffering " and see this great sight " (Exod. iii. 3) : how our most merciful Father abandons to the bitterness of cruel pain His children predestined to glory, yet not for their destruction but for their purgation, in mercy not in anger, so that they may become, instead of " vessels of wrath " (Jer. l. 25) doomed to perdition, vessels of grace prepared for the kingdom. It is these, therefore, I will endeavour to succour, I will intercede for them with groans and sighs and fervent prayers, I will offer up the august sacrifice in atonement for their sins : if perhaps the Lord will see and judge and bring them from labour to repose, from misery to glory, from the crucible to the crown. By these and such-like means I can shorten their penance, obtain for them rest and relief from their torments. Explore, then, O faithful soul, this region of expiation and observe what is there being done. And

let the merchandise thou shalt purchase in this mart be a feeling of tender compassion.

The fourth region is the region of hell. O most barren and inhospitable region, a region to be dreaded, a region to be shunned! "Land of forgetfulness" (Ps. lxxxvii. 13), "land of affliction" (Ps. xliii. 20), "land of misery and darkness where no order but everlasting horror abideth" (Job x. 22)! Land of living death, with its raging fires and its piercing cold and its undying worms (Mark ix. 43) and its intolerable stench and its crushing hammers and its palpable gloom and its eternal confusion of guilty consciences and its cramping chains and its awful, devilish faces! I tremble all over and my soul is filled with horror, yea, "all my bones are affrighted" (Job iv. 14) as often as I recall that most dismal region. Oh, "how thou art fallen, O Lucifer, who didst rise in the morning" (Is. xiv. 12)! "Thou wast in the pleasures of the paradise of God, every precious stone was thy covering" (Ezech. xxviii. 13): now, "under thee shall the moth be strewed and thy covering shall be worms" (Is. xiv, 11). Oh, my brethren, how wide the difference between a garment of jewels and a garment of maggots! between the pleasures of paradise and the consuming moths of hell (Matt. vi. 19)! I know that this place has been prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. xxv. 41) and also for men who imitate his pride, and that here they must end without ending, die without dying, suffer without ceasing. Let us, therefore, go down alive into hell that after our death we may escape it; let us examine with the eyes of our soul its various species of torture; let us then for the future turn away from sin and vice, remembering the doom that awaits them; let us hate iniquity and love the law of God

(Ps. cxviii. 163) : and in this mart of misery let us fill our wallet with the precious merchandise of horror of sin.

The fifth and last of our regions is the celestial paradise. O happy region of supernal powers, where the Most Holy Trinity is seen face to face by the blessed, where that sublime company of winged Seraphim cease not to applaud and to cry out in ecstasy, " Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts " (Is. vi. 3) ! Region of delight, where the children of God are given to drink of the torrent of His pleasure (Ps. xxxv. 9) ! Region of splendour, where " the just shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father " (Matt. xiii. 43) ! Region of joy and gladness, where " everlasting joy is upon their heads " (Is. xxxv. 10) ! Region of abundance, where " there is no want to them that see Him " (Ps. xxxiii. 10) ! Region of sweetness where the Lord shows Himself sweet to all (Ps. cxliv. 9) ! Region of peace, where " in peace He hath made His place " (Ps. lxxv. 3) ! Region of wonder, where are to be seen all His wonderful works ! Region of satiety, where " we shall be satisfied when His glory shall appear " (Ps. xvi. 15) ! Region of vision, where is reserved for us the beatific vision of our God ! O sublime region, abounding in wealth, in this valley of tears how we sigh after thee, where wisdom abides without ignorance, memory without forgetfulness, understanding without error, reason without any obscurity ! Region wherein the Lord " passing will minister " unto His elect (Luke xii. 37), that is to say, He will show Himself to them as He is (1 John iii. 2). There shall God " be all in all " (1 Cor. xv. 28), when the whole universe, admirably ordered, shall give glory to the Creator and joy to the creature. Examine, then,

O faithful soul, with the eyes of holy desire this most blessed region, and see " the King of glory " (Ps. xxiii. 7) magnificent in his beauty (Is. xxxiii. 17), surrounded by legions of angels and multitudes of saints, " putting down the mighty from their seat and exalting the humble " (Luke i. 52), condemning the demons and saving men. Contemplate this majestic scene, and say with the Psalmist, " Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord ; they shall praise Thee for ever and ever " (Ps. lxxxiii. 5). And when thou hast inspected all this priceless and most beautiful merchandise, fill thy wallet with that which is precious above all, the love of thy God.

Thou hast now explored the five regions, thou hast examined the various commodities exhibited in each, thou hast filled thy wallet with goodly store, and blessed art thou amongst merchants. Trade, therefore, until the Lord thy God cometh, so that when He calls thee to account thou mayest be able to say to Him, " Lord. thou didst deliver to me five talents : behold I have gained other five over and above " (Matt. xxv. 20), and mayest be found worthy to hear His gladsome invitation, " Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord " (ibid. 21), the Bridegroom of the Church, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

ON THE SWEETNESS HIDDEN IN THE WORDS AND IN THE YOKE OF CHRIST.

"*Honey and milk are under Thy tongue*"—Cant. iv. 11.

"Honey and milk," so we read, "are under the tongue" of the heavenly Bridegroom. That, dearest brethren, is for us very necessary. For what is *on* His tongue sounds harsh enough. "The words of the wise are as goads and as nails deeply fastened in" (Eccles. xii. 11). There is one whose "words are made sweeter than oil" (Ps. liv. 22), "but let not the oil of the sinner fatten my head" (Ps. cxl. 5). I desire that "the just man shall correct me" (ibid.), for this is done "in mercy," rather than have my head fattened with that oil of adulation. Rightly are the words of flatterers and evil counsellors described not as "sweet" but as "sweetened," since whatever sweetness they have is more superficial and apparent than true and solid: in reality "they are darts," as the Royal Prophet testifies (Ps. liv. 22). For what lies concealed under the flatterer's tongue? Let the same Prophet answer. "Under his tongue are labour and sorrow" (Ps. ix. 7, juxta H.). But it is "honey and milk" we find under the tongue of Him Who, as the Psalmist sings, "makes a pretence of labour in the commandments" (Ps. xciii. 20).* You are astonished, my brethren, to hear of Truth making pretence? Well, you may have a right

* "Qui fingis laborem in praecepto," rendered by the Douay Translators: "Who framest labour in commandment." For the various expositions of this difficult text, see Bellarmine *in loco*.—(Translator.)

to be astonished at this, but you certainly have no right to doubt it. And if you want further evidence, you will find in the Gospel how the Lord, journeying to Emmaus with the two disciples, when they drew near to the town, " made as though He would go farther " (Luke xxiv. 28). And wherefore should He not offer a figment to the mind of man who is himself but a figment ? For, as it is written, " He knoweth our figment " (Ps. cii. 14), that is to say, our natural fragility, so impatient of labour, so intolerant of delay, so liable to succumb under both one and the other. In His loving-kindness, therefore, hath He so arranged that " godliness " should be found " profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come " (1 Tim. iv. 8). Thus, He only " makes a pretence of labour in the commandments " ; nothing that He enjoins is really difficult. Hear how He acknowledges that the labour is but a pretence : " Take My yoke upon you," He says, " and you shall find rest to your souls, for My yoke is sweet and My burden light ". (Matt. xi. 29-30). Who does not see that nothing more than the pretence of labour can be there where no labour is experienced but only rest ?

So, then, we find labour on the tongue of Christ and under His tongue the sweetness of honey. What, think you, shall be found *over* his tongue ? Oh, what but joys ineffable " which it is not granted to man to utter " (2 Cor. xii. 4) ! How unhappy those who, attending exclusively to what sounds on the tongue, cannot comprehend what lies hid thereunder or that which is reserved above ! " This saying is hard," they complain, " and who can hear it ? " (John vi. 61). Hard in truth it is, but for all that it is " the word of life "

(1 John i. 1). "He that taketh not up his cross and followeth Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. x. 38); "If any man come to Me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke xiv. 26). What word can be harder than these? "Do not err" (1 Cor. vi. 9), brethren. That which you are considering looks indeed like a stone, but in reality it is bread. It is hard on its outward surface, but beneath the rind lurks an incomparable sweetness. The Lord your God is only putting you to the test. And this "pretence of labour in the commandments" is meant to try your faith and to put your love to the proof. But even granting that it is really a stone: have not you as much faith as the demons? "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread" (Matt. iv. 3). We all know who it was that spoke these words. Satan had no doubt that He Whom he believed to be the Son of God could change a stone into bread with a single word, than which nothing is easier. It is allowable to learn even from an enemy. Therefore, let us also say to the Son of God, "Command, O Lord, that these stones be made bread." And you know that He Who came to redeem, not the devils, but the children of Adam, so confounded His adversaries that in putting them to shame He gave instruction to His little ones. For in His answer He did not say what the tempter desired Him to say but rather what it was necessary for us to hear. "Not in bread alone," He replied, "doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God" (Matt. iv. 4).

What sayest thou to this, thou enemy of truth?

Thou dost acknowledge indeed what thou canst not deny : that the Son of God is able with a word to change stones into bread. When, therefore, He tells me concerning the words of God, and concerning every one without any exception, that " man's life is such, and the life of my spirit in such things as these " (Is. xxxviii. 16), why dost thou keep murmuring thy objections against each of them, repeating in my heart : " This word is hard and who can hear it ? " The words which the Son of God " spoke and they were made " (Ps. xxxii. 9) the nourishment of life, dost thou (who art not the Son of God but the usurper of His glory) call stones ? Thou art deceived if thou supposest I esteem thee (as with impious presumption thou didst once esteem thyself) the equal of God and consequently capable of changing the bread with a word back into stones. It is to no purpose thou commandest this spiritual bread to be made stones, because thou art not the Son of God. Nor less in vain dost thou offer us thine own stones for bread, thy scorpions for eggs, thy serpents for fishes (Luke xi. 11-12). But woe to them that call bread stones and stones bread, " that put darkness for light and light for darkness " (Is. v 20), reputing the yoke of Christ bitter and " counting it delightful to be under the briers " (Job xxx. 7). As for me, I want no such delight. I desire rather to " taste and see that the Lord is sweet " (Ps. xxxiii. 9). The Prophet who counsels us to do this sought for himself the experience of what he recommends. For we hear him exclaiming in another psalm, " How sweet are Thy words to my palate ! More than honey to my mouth " (Ps. cxviii. 103) ; and elsewhere, " Oh, how great is the multitude of Thy sweetness, O Lord, which Thou hast hidden for them that fear Thee "

(Ps. xxx. 20). Now, where do you suppose that sweetness is hidden? Where, but under the Bridegroom's tongue and under the head of her who sings in the Canticle, "His left hand is under my head and His right hand shall embrace me" (Cant. ii. 6). For although in "the promise of the life which now is" there is sweetness and a "multitude of sweetness," yes, a great, an immensely great multitude of sweetness; nevertheless it is only in "the promise of the life that is to come" the fulness and perfection of sweetness can be found. "Thou hast made perfect for them that hope in Thee," says the Psalmist, after mentioning the multitude of sweetness hidden for them that fear the Lord, "Thou hast made perfect for them that hope in Thee in the sight of the sons of men." * (Ps. xxx. 20). We are not told what it is that has been made perfect. This word is neither *under* nor *on* but *above* the tongue. For therefore "ear hath not heard," because tongue cannot tell, "what things God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Cor. ii. 9). And observe, that consummation shall not be hidden, but fully visible "in the sight of the sons of men." Rightly too does the Prophet say, not that the Lord *will* make perfect, but that he hath already "made perfect for them that hope in Him," because "by hope we are saved," as the Apostle speaks (Rom. viii. 24).

* "Quam magna multitudo dulcedinis tuae, Domine, quam abscondisti timentibus te!
Perfecisti eis qui sperant in te in conspectu filiorum hominum."

These two verses are usually connected in meaning by understanding the relative "quam" with "perfecisti." Thus the Douay version has:

"Oh, how great is the multitude of Thy sweetness, O Lord, which Thou hast hidden for them that fear Thee!
Which Thou hast wrought for them that hope in Thee."

Cf. Bellermine *in loco*.—(Translator.)

ON THE MOTIVES FOR FERVOUR AND PERSEVERANCE IN THE SERVICE OF GOD.

What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that he hath rendered to me?"—(Ps. cxv. 12).

Dearest brethren, you are walking in the way that leads to life, in the way, direct and undefiled (Ps. xvii. 31), which leads to the holy city, to " that Jerusalem which is above, which is free, which is our mother " (Gal. iv. 27). The ascent, I must say, is difficult, forasmuch as this road runs straight up to the very summit of the mystical mountain : yet its shortness in comparison with other roads renders it, if not absolutely easy, at any rate the least difficult of all. But you, my children, with a joyous ease and an easy joyousness, are not content to *walk* up this steep incline—you rather *run* to the top, because you are free from impediments and girded for the journey, because you bear no heavy burdens on your backs. Far different is the case with the men of this world. Encumbered as they are with their horses and chariots and the embarrassing luggage of their temporal affairs, they resolve to follow the devious path that winds round the slopes of the mountain, and after many a fall over dangerous precipices scarcely at length do they arrive at their journey's end. Happy, therefore, are you who have for Christ's sake renounced both yourselves and all your belongings, without any the least reservation, in order to scale the mountain's crest to " Him who ascended upon the

west: the Lord is His name" (Ps. lxvii. 5). But as for those who, although they have fled out of Egypt, still hanker weakly after the Egyptian flesh-pots (Exod. xvi. 3): such as they shall "not find the way of a city for their habitation" (Ps. cvi. 4); rather, bowed down beneath the oppressive burdens of their own wills, they shall fall with and under these burdens, and with difficulty at best accomplish the course they have undertaken.

May I not say it, brethren?—that the life you live here is truly apostolic, all thanks to Him to Whose grace all is due. The apostles "left all things" (Matt. xix. 27) and, assembled in the school of the Saviour and in His divine presence, "drew waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains" (Is. xii. 3), drinking the waters of life at their very source. Blessed the eyes that saw what they saw! But have not you done something similar to their illustrious example, and that, not in the presence of the Lord, but in His absence, not at the word of His living voice, but at the bidding of His messengers? My brethren, vindicate this your glorious prerogative: that whereas the holy apostles believed on the testimony of their hearing and sight, your faith needed nothing more than the herald's announcement. "Therefore, so stand fast in the Lord, my most dearly beloved" (Phil. iv. 1) that, just as they persevered in the royal way of justice, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, in labours and fastings, in watchings and other afflictions (2 Cor. xi. 27): so may you also—their equals to some extent in penitential exercises, if not in merit—so, I say, may you likewise sing to the Lord your God when you stand before His throne of glory: "We have rejoiced for the days in

which Thou hast humbled us, for the years in which we have seen evils" (Ps. lxxxix. 15). I tell you in truth that you are truly advancing in the right way, in the holy way, in the way that leads to the Holy of holies. And let me tell you something further for your fuller consolation: Receive it, then, as my most solemn assurance that from the arms of this poor sinner there have flown to the everlasting joys above the souls of choir religious, lay-brothers, and novices, without the least hindrance, once they were set free from the chains of our mortality. And if you desire to know how I can be so certain of this, let me inform you that it has been declared and revealed to me with the clearest and most indubitable evidence.

Consequently, my brethren, I have no need to feel afraid for you, or on your account, of the power of Satan and his ministers, whose strength, as I know, has been broken and brought to nought through the wounds of the Saviour. For that "strong man" One stronger has overcome (Matt. xii. 29), in the "Spirit of fortitude" (Is. xi. 2), "breaking in pieces his gates of brass, and bursting his bars of iron" (Is. xlv. 2). No, it is not the demon's might that makes me so anxious about you; it is that craft and cunning and that knowledge of our inherent human fragility which he owes in part to the perspicacity of his spiritual nature and in part to an experience extending over many thousands of years—it is of these I feel apprehensive. Reflect that it was not a lion or a bear or any other powerful beast of the earth that the insatiable murderer of souls (John viii. 44) made us of to destroy our first parents: no, but rather the sinuous and subtle serpent, which owing to the wonderful flexibility of its body can with equal ease

either cover its tail with its head or its head with its tail. For we do not read in Holy Scripture that the serpent was *stronger*, but that he "was *more subtle* than any of the beasts of the earth" (Gen. iii. 1). Hence, he began with an interrogation, endeavouring to sound the mind of the woman, for he knew that fraud would serve him here better than force. "Why," he asked, "hath God commanded you that you should not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?" "And the woman answered him: lest perhaps we die" (*ibid.* 1-3). Notice here that what God had pronounced as certain, saying: "in what day soever thou shalt eat of it thou shalt die the death" (Gen. ii. 17), that Eve referred to as doubtful—"lest *perhaps* we die." And observe now the cunning and malice of the serpent: "He said to the woman: No, you shall not die the death" (Gen. iii. 4). What the Lord affirms, the woman doubts, and the devil denies. Here then is the cause of my uneasiness: lest as Eve was seduced by the serpent's cunning "so should your minds be corrupted and fall from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. xi. 3).

Perhaps there is someone amongst you, my brethren, to whose thoughts the same seducer addresses himself thuswise: "Why hath God commanded you that you should observe this Rule?" For, always accommodating himself to the variety of our dispositions, to the lukewarm monk he suggests relaxation and to the fervent a life of greater austerity. But in whatever rôle he appears, his one aim and object is to remove us from "the counsel of the just and the congregation" (Ps. cx. 1). Be sure, then, that the spirit who makes such suggestions to thee is "a lying spirit" (2 Par. xviii.

21), " the spirit of him that hath power," and who is envious of thy vocation. And it was doubtless this kind of seduction the Wise Man had in view when he wrote : " If the spirit of him that hath power ascend upon thee, leave not thy place " (Eccles. x. 4). For we must not suppose (God forbid !) that " the Spirit of truth " (John xiv. 17) Who led thee hither wishes now to lead thee away. There can be in Him no contradiction, no opposition of yea and nay, but His inspirations are always consistent, as irrefragible authority attests (2 Cor. 1. 17–19).* " No man," says the great Apostle, " speaking by the Spirit of God, saith anathema to Jesus " (1 Cor. xii. 3). Now " Jesus " signifies " Saviour " or " Salvation," and the word " anathema " means " separation." He therefore who suggests to thee the thought of separating thyself from the way of salvation " saith anathema to Jesus," and consequently is neither from God nor " speaketh by the Spirit of God " : because the Holy Ghost has not come to scatter but to unite, and it is His constant endeavour to lead home to their native land the dispersed children of Israel.

What, my brother ? Thou desirest to look about for a more austere manner of life ? Let me assure thee that that which thou seest observed amongst us is the most austere that can be found, yea, and if thou wishest to be candid thou wilt confess that it imitates, in so far as is possible now, the primitive school of the the Saviour. Or perhaps thou darest to descend even

* This is true, generally speaking ; but as Suarez says (*De Ingres, Relig.* l. v. c. viii.) the Holy Ghost may sometimes give a vocation which nevertheless He does not intend shall be carried out in effect. Just as he inspired Abraham with the purpose of sacrificing his son and David with the design of building the Temple.—(Translator.)

in thought to a life less austere ? O my dearest brother, " if thou also didst know " (Luke xix. 42) how much thou art in debt and to how many creditors ! Certainly thou wouldst perceive how little that is which thou dost and how undeserving of mention in comparison with thine obligations. Wouldst thou like to know who thy creditors are and what it is thou owest them ? Listen. There is first of all Christ Jesus, to Whom thou owest thy whole life, because for the sake of that life He laid down His own, yea He endured most bitter torments to spare thee the eternal torments of hell. What can appear hard or painful to thee when thou recallest how He Who, " in the form of God " (Phil. ii. 6), " in the day of His eternity " (2 Peter iii. 18), was " begotten before the day-star in the brightness of the saints " (Ps. cix. 3), " the Splendour of God's glory and the Figure of His substance " (Heb. i. 3)—when thou rememberest how He came down into thy dungeon, even into thy mire, so that, as the Psalmist sings, He " stuck fast in the mire of the deep " (Ps. lxviii. 3) ? What bitterness will not become sweet to thee when thou callest to mind all the afflictions of thy Lord, and in pious meditation considerest, first, the sufferings of His infant years ; then the labours of His preaching, the fatigues of His journeyings, His temptations and fastings, His nights passed in prayer, His tears of compassion, the attempts to entrap Him in His speech ; finally the perils He endured from false brethren (2 Cor. xi. 26), the contradictions, the spittings, the blows, the scourges, the gibes, the mockeries, the reproaches, the nails, and all the other countless trials to which He submitted, whilst for the human race He " wrought salvation in the midst of the earth " (Ps. lxxiii. 12). Oh, how

undeserved a compassion, how gratuitous and well proved a love, how unhoped for a condescension was that! What overwhelming sweetness, what insuperable gentleness do we here find exhibited to our view! "The King of glory" (Ps. xxiii. 7) crucified for a most miserable slave, for a contemptible worm! "Who hath ever heard such a thing? and who hath seen the like to this?" (Is. lxvii. 8). "For scarce for a just man will one die," but "when we were as yet enemies and ungodly Christ died for us" (Rom. v. 7-10), in order to restore to us our rights to heaven, so sweet a Friend is He, so prudent a Counsellor, so powerful a Helper.

"What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me?" (Ps. cxv. 12). Is it not true that if I had at my disposal all the lives of all the countless children of Adam, and all the ages of the world's history, and all the toils and sufferings of all the men that have been, are, or will be: the whole would be as nothing when compared with that most blessed Body, immolated for us, Which was an object of wonder and admiration even to the supernal Powers in Its conception by the operation of the Holy Ghost, in Its birth of the Virgin, in the spotless innocence of Its life, in the splendour of Its miracles, in the heavenly doctrines that issued forth from It, in the sacred mysteries revealed through It? You see, then, my brethren, that "as the heavens are exalted above the earth" (Is. lv. 9) so is the life of Christ above our lives, for which nevertheless He laid it down. Just as there can be no comparison between that which is nothing and that which is something, in the same way no proportion is possible between my life and His, since

the one could not be more glorious than it is nor the other more degraded. Do not suppose what I have been saying to be a mere rhetorical exaggeration, for no tongue is sufficient to express and no mind to comprehend that mystery of such amazing condescension. When, therefore, I have offered my Saviour all that I am and all that I can do in return for His goodness to me, what is it but as a star to the sun, as a drop to the river, as a stone to the tower, as a pebble to the mountain, as a grain to the granary? I possess only two mites (Mark xii. 42), two very worthless mites, my body, that is, and my soul. Or to speak more correctly, I have but a single mite, my free will. And shall I hesitate to give up that to the will of One so great, Who has loaded one so little with such inestimable favours, Who has purchased me whole with the whole of Himself? And if I refuse to make the sacrifice, with what countenance, with what mind and conscience shall I have recourse to "the bowels of the mercy of our God" (Luke i. 78)? How shall I dare to pierce that mighty Bulwark that "keepeth Israel" (Ps. cxx. 4) and draw forth for my own ransom that most precious Blood, not in drops but in torrents, from the five wounds of His Body? O "perverse generation and unfaithful children" (Deut. xxxii. 20)! "What will you do in the day of visitation and of the calamity that cometh from afar? To whom will you flee for help? And where will you leave your glory?" (Is. x. 3).

But whilst I am thus able to pay hardly the smallest part of what I owe to my Redeemer, is it to Him alone I am indebted? Far from it. The sins of the past demand from me in reparation the whole of my future life: that I may "bring forth fruit worthy of penance"

(Matt. iii. 8) and " recount all my years in the bitterness of my soul " (Is. xxxviii. 15). And who is capable of this ? My sins surpass in number the sands on the seashore, my offences are multiplied beyond measure, and my iniquities are so manifold that I am not worthy to lift mine eyes to the face of heaven, because I have provoked Thine anger, O Lord, " and have done evil before Thee " (Ps. l. 6). Yea, " evils without number have surrounded me ; my iniquities have overtaken me, and I was not able to see " (Ps. xxxix. 13). How then shall I number that which is " without number ? " What satisfaction can I offer when I shall be called upon to repay to " the last farthing " (Matt. v. 26). " Who can understand sins ? " (Ps. xviii. 13). " It is easier to find persons who have preserved their baptismal innocence," say that oracle of the Holy Ghost, the blessed Ambrose, " than those who have repaired its loss by adequate penance." * Yea, and whatever penance I perform, howsoever much I may afflict and punish myself, nevertheless not for the merit of my satisfaction but " for Thy name's sake Thou wilt pardon my sin " (Ps. xxiv. 11). When therefore, my brother, thou has given thy whole life, and thine every thought, all thou possessest, and all thou canst do, in payment of this one debt : does it seem to thee that thou hast offered anything—I do not say sufficient, but anything deserving of mention ? A while since thy life was given to the Saviour in return for His, and now thou perceivest it must all go in satisfaction for thy past offences. Is it possible to satisfy two creditors with the same coin ?

What wilt thou say if I now show thee a third creditor who claims as due to him that life of thine, and with as

* *De Poenit.* l. ii. c. x.

much insistence as justice? I suppose I may take it that thou also desirest to dwell in that city whereof it is said: "Glorious things are told of thee, O city of God" (Ps. lxxxvi. 3), that thou longest for that glory which "eye hath not seen nor ear heard neither hath it entered into the heart of man" to conceive (1 Cor. ii. 9), and for the eternal kingdom, and for everlasting life? I presume thou wishest to "be as the angels of God in heaven" (Matt. xxii. 30), to be even an "heir of God and joint heir with Christ" (Rom. viii. 17), to hear the angelic songs in the streets of the supernal Sion, to witness that unimaginable scene when Christ "shall deliver up the kingdom to God and the Father" (1 Cor. xv. 24)—however this text is to be understood—"so that God may be all in all" (ibid. 28), and finally to be "like to God" and to "see Him as He is" (1 John iii. 2). Nor can I doubt that it is thy hope to see "the day break and the shadows retire" (Cant. ii. 17), when the eternal sun rising in splendour shall scatter the clouds, when there shall be no longer a decline of day but everlasting meridian, with the fulness unchanging of heat and light, perpetual solstice, exclusion of darkness, the drying up of all unwholesome marshes and the banishing of all pestilential vapours. To purchase such happiness, will it not be necessary to give thyself wholly, with all that is thine, without any exception or reservation? And when thou hast collected together and computed all this thy purchase-money, remember that "the sufferings of this time—and of this body—are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us" (Rom. viii. 18). But yet wilt thou be so impudent or so imprudent as to dare to offer even as the price of heaven thy one poor mite, for which the

Saviour's passion and remorse for sin have already put forward conflicting claims ?

But what if I bring before thee yet another creditor, one who, as having the first claim, insists that the three other creditors shall retire in his favour ? Lo ! He Who made the heavens and the earth " is nigh, even at the doors " (Matt. xxiv. 33). He is thy Creator and thou art His creature ; thou art His slave and He thy Master ; He is the Potter and thou but the clay (Rom. ix. 21). Consequently, all that thou art thou owest to Him, from Whom thou hast received all—to Him, I say, in the first place, Who hath fashioned thee and favoured thee, Who hath made subservient to thy needs the courses of the stars, the temperature of the air, the fertility of the soil, the manifold fruits of the earth. Him, therefore, thou art bound to serve with thy whole strength and with thine every member and faculty, lest perchance He regard thee with an eye of indignation and despise thee and destroy thee eternally in everlasting perdition. I do not suppose thou wilt be so utterly insane as to even mention thy mite now, let alone presuming to measure it against such obligations. But tell me to which of these four creditors thou intendest to pay what thou owest, since each of them is alone sufficiently powerful to throttle thee (Matt. xviii. 28). Alas, alas ! " O Lord, I suffer violence : answer Thou for me " (Is. xxxviii. 14). " Into Thy hands I commend my spirit " (Ps. xxx. 6) and body, that is to say, my mite. Do Thou make good all my deficiencies ; do Thou save me from all the penalties of insolvency, because Thou art God and not man, and what is impossible to man is possible to Thee (Luke xviii. 27). I have done what I could (Mark xiv. 8). Therefore O Lord, " I pray Thee,

hold me excused " (Luke xiv. 19), because " Thine eyes have seen my imperfection." (Ps. cxxxviii. 16).

Which of you, my brethren, will any longer grumble and say : " Our toil is too hard, our fasting too severe, our watching too long " : since even by doing our very utmost we shall not be able to meet the thousandth part, nay, not even an infinitesmal part of our obligations ? And perhaps we have here our true Quadragesima, not exterior but internal, which contains, not the rind of a sacrament, but " the fat of the corn " (Ps. cxlviii. 3). For if to each of our four creditors, exclusively and apart, we owe the full observance of the Decalogue, manifestly ten multiplied by four will give us that quadragesimal observance which we are bound to keep and guard all the days of our life.

Finally, may the Holy Spirit Who gathered you together in this place preserve you constant in all good works, so that " when He shall appear Who is your Life, then you also may appear in glory with Him " (Col. iii. 4), Jesus Christ our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

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